The Nation

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EDITORIAL

MAR 13

A SHOT FROM DR. FEELGOOD

A few weeks ago, Wall Street wits were circulating this analysis of U.S.-Kuwaiti intimacy: a banking system without a country for a country without a banking system. Now that the Desert Storm troopers have given Kuwait back to its rightful portfolio managers, it's time to start thinking about the rest of the formula.

Before war news obscured everything, the notion that the U.S. economy was suffering from something more serious than a cyclical slump was gaining currency; the thrill of destroying Iraq put all that to rest.

Privately, though, the monetary authorities seem less sanguine. The Federal Reserve is trying every stimulant in its armamentarium to jolt a fading economy back to life. Not content with routine strategies like lowering interest rates, the Fed has also been talking about opening its discount window to all comers (a privilege normally available only to sickly banks) and even about buying bad loans from banks—giving them the cash to make more bad loans. Regulators are revising accounting standards so bad loans can be overlooked.

For a while, regulators and bankers were tightening up on credit standards. While reasonable on its face, that policy helped throw the economy into recession. It quickly became clear that bad loans are the lifeblood of our economy.

Financial crises are largely a reflection of problems in the real economy. Households, for example, turned to borrowing because their incomes badly lagged behind their expenses. Similar things can be said about corporate borrowing. So when new loans dry up, the old loans turn sour.

Willed optimism and a megadose of stimulants injected by Dr. Fed may revive the debilitated economy for a time. But amphetamines and happy talk alone will cure nothing.

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BRAVING THE NEW WORLD ORDER
Daniel Singer

LIBERATE D.C.
Jamin B. Raskin

HUNGARY FOR AMERICAN POP
Miklós Vámos

CORPORATE SOCIALIZED MEDICINE
Colin Gordon

SKVORECKY'S 'MIRACLE'
John Clute

THE STALIN ENIGMA
Mark von Hagen

LESSONS OF THE GULF

THE PEACE MOVEMENT'S NEXT STEPS

MICHAEL T. KLARE

There is no question that the Persian Gulf conflict had a devastating impact on the American peace movement. Not only did the movement fail to stop a horrific and unnecessary war but it was portrayed by the media as a powerless anachronism that had fallen out of step with the new American jingoism. Recovering from this trauma will be slow and difficult—but necessary. Now that the killing frenzy is over and the real world of global politics is reasserting itself, there are as many risks and perils as before and thus an acute need for guidance from a principled and vocal peace movement.

But first it should be said that the movement behaved completely honorably in opposing the war despite its failure to prevent a bloodbath. Note that this was the first war in history whose overarching strategic design was dictated more by concern about the resurgence of antiwar protests than in response to actual battlefield conditions. President Bush was never really worried about Iraqi military capabilities: His every move was dictated by his fear of the "Vietnam syndrome." This can be seen in his decision to act quickly and with overwhelming force, and in the muzzling and manipulation of the mass media. Despite these actions, the peace movement did mobilize significant opposition to the war, but not enough to stay the hand of an imperial presidency.

There was very little organized peace activity under way when the gulf crisis broke out, so a new antiwar movement had to be built

(*Cont. on p. 364*)

The Nation 125

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LETTERS.

O CAPTAINS! ABE AND GORB

Falls Church, Va.

As someone who taught American history in one of my former lives, during which I published an article arguing that everyone should have sat out the Civil War, I was intrigued by Eric Foner's recent editorial, "Lincoln's Lesson" [Feb. 11].

As far as I can tell, the lesson seems to be that political, moral and even historical arguments are irrelevant to secessionist controversies because great powers will always stamp out separatist movements if they can. Thus, Foner argues, Gorby is no worse for bashing the Baltics than Abe was for crushing the Confederates.

This is a position put forward most eloquently a number of years ago by Edmund Wilson in the introduction to *Patriotic Gore*, where he treated Lincoln, Bismarck and Lenin as all of a piece and described wars, especially wars like the Civil War, which put down internal separatists, as "stimulated as a rule primarily by the same instincts as the voracity of a sea slug." While the implication of Wilson's (and my) argument is that Abe was no better than Gorby, however, Foner argues that Gorby is no worse than Abe. Coming from someone who in one of his former lives wrote so powerfully of the moral appeal of the Lincolnian platform, Foner's view is curiously amoral.

Because the argument is amoral, it is also profoundly apolitical. Foner does touch on some of the theoretical dilemmas of self-determination, such as who gets to decide what political "self" deserves determination and what happens to minorities within the seceding units who want to remain with the larger union. But, perhaps because of those dilemmas, he seems to conclude that political debate and judgments are irrelevant. He asserts that Lithuania has even less justification for secession than Texas had in 1861, but that is almost an aside. His larger point is that the historical, political and moral justifications of the secessionists don't matter: Whether in Soviet Georgia or Savannah, Georgia, secession is "something no leader of a powerful nation can be expected to allow."

That is a curious standard by which to judge political movements, especially in a journal of the left. Would Foner be so quick, for example, to condemn separatist movements launched by Native Americans or Southern slaves? Should the Palestinians pack up and go home, if they have a home, because the Israelis "can be expected" to reject their demands as disruptive of the good of Eretz Israel? Perhaps in trying to annex Kuwait, Saddam Hussein should be regarded as simply a premature antisecessionist.

Foner does present one concluding argument besides the predictable response of Presidents, Chairmen, Prime Ministers, etc., for opposing secession. Lincoln passionately believed that, as he stated in his first inaugural address, "the central idea of secession, is the essence of anarchy," and Foner concludes by noting that "Gorbachev would surely agree." So he would, but then so would George III.

John S. Rosenberg

FONER REPLIES

New York City

John Rosenberg should certainly be given credit for consistency—he believes that the United States has no more right to exist as a large, heterogeneous nation than the U.S.S.R. This is not, needless to say, a position widely held among American advocates of Soviet secessionism. However, it is not entirely clear what principle Rosenberg would substitute for my "amoral," "apolitical" argument. I contended that the democratic rights of one minority do not include the power to abrogate the rights of other minorities, and that the implementation of the right of self-determination is likely to be very complicated. Rosenberg's confusing letter reinforces the latter point. All I can surmise is that he believes the map of the world should be redrawn so that every ethnic, religious, linguistic and once-independent group has its own nation-state. That, indeed, would be a recipe for anarchy.

Eric Foner

TAKE AIM—PLEASE

Paris

Reed Irvine of Accuracy in Media writes in your letters column [Dec. 17, 1990] that Robert "Soblen, like the Sterns, fled the country, but he ended up in England, and he committed suicide to avoid extradition." He does not mention that Soblen fled to Israel, where he asked for asylum according to the same law of return that gives Kahanist murderers and terrorists impunity from extradition. Soblen, however, was promptly extradited by the Israeli authorities (the Labor Party) to the United States and killed himself on his way back to your country. So much for accuracy in media—or omission of same.

Maxim Ghilan, editor
Israel & Palestine

NO THREAT

Chicago

Joseph Buttigieg charges that an article of mine in the December 1989 *Tikkun* claimed for Israel a "cultural superiority" and set the stage for recent death threats against Edward Said ["Letters," Feb. 18]. I did not proclaim Israeli culture superior to Palestinian or any other culture. Rather, I offered an interpretation of Said's recent political writing in the context of his own statements about Palestinian frustration in getting recognition for their national narrative. Although I criticized Said's ideas and tone, I value his intellectual work and deplore the threats against him.

Mark Krupnick
Divinity School
University of Chicago

MOTOWN BLUES AND REDS

Detroit

James F. Kinney's claim that persons named in the Detroit Police Red Squad files must come to the Detroit office to obtain their files is absolutely false ["Letters," Feb. 18]. The file information is readily accessible to any authorized person, anywhere, and at no cost.

These files were gathered in secret by a unit of the Detroit Police Department over many years. They include an estimated total of 1.5 million names of individuals suspected of being political dissenters, social activists, civil rights workers or simply citizens who had their license-plate numbers recorded at a concert or an art show.

After a lengthy lawsuit, all retrievable information is now being released to each individual who applies. A court order established a citizen-trustee board to supervise the program, and the costs of the notification and distribution of files are borne by the City of Detroit.

Dorian Paster
Red Squad Notification and Distribution Compliance Program

DOC HOLIDAY

Birmingham, Mich.

In his poem "Beating About Executive Privilege" [Feb. 25], Richard Howard asks "Who was it first said/TV is the opiate of the masses?" May I nominate the jazz pharmacologist Billie Holiday. Here is the last paragraph of her 1956 autobiography, *Lady Sings the Blues*:

> I can let the doctors in on something. I knew I'd really kicked [my habit] one morning when I couldn't stand television any more. When I was high and wanted to stay that way, I could watch TV by the hour and loved it. . . . if you've beat the habit again and kicked TV, no jail on earth can worry you too much.

William Dufty

AUTHOR'S QUERY

For an authorized edition of the letters of Harold Clurman (1901–1980), American theater director and *Nation* theater critic from 1953 to 1980, I would be pleased to hear from anyone who may possess some of his letters or may know the whereabouts of any.

Robert H. Hethmon
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Canoga Park, CA 91303
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CONTENTS.

Volume 252, Number 11

LETTERS
362

EDITORIALS
361 A Shot From Dr. Feelgood
361 Lessons of the Gulf: The Peace Movement's Next Steps — *Michael T. Klare*
363 Ghostly Writer
364 Back to Attica — *William M. Kunstler*

COLUMNS
365 A Short Military Biography Of Saddam Hussein — *Calvin Trillin*
366 Minority Report — *Christopher Hitchens*

ARTICLES
367 Letter From Europe: Braving Bush's New World Order — *Daniel Singer*
371 Now That We've Freed Kuwait: Liberate the District — *Jamin B. Raskin*
374 U.S. Cultural Invasion: Hungary for American Pop — *Miklós Vámos*
376 Cosmetic Surgery: Health Care the Corporate Way — *Colin Gordon*

BOOKS & THE ARTS
381 Skvorecky: The Miracle Game — *John Clute*
382 Laqueur: Stalin: The Glasnost Revelations
Tucker: Stalin in Power: The Revolution From Above, 1928–1941
Tsipko: Is Stalinism Really Dead? — *Mark von Hagen*
387 La Botz: Rank-and-File Rebellion: Teamsters for a Democratic Union — *Jonathan Tasini*
388 Films — *Stuart Klawans*
390 The Garden (poem) — *Isabel Nathaniel*
391 Book Note — *Kirkpatrick Sale*
392 The Pocketwatch (poem) — *Nicholas Christopher*

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EDITORIALS.

Ghostly Writer

Most writers, even hacks, hope their books will live on after they've gone to literary Valhalla. Now a big publisher has come up with a scheme not only to keep a dead author in print but to keep her writing new books as well. Novels bearing the byline of the popular V.C. Andrews continue to issue forth even though she died in 1986. This miracle is not accomplished by spirit writing. The only ghost involved is the living person who, under an arrangement with the publisher and the author's heirs, concocts ersatz V.C. Andrews novels. A buyer of her latest best seller, *Dawn*, can learn that V.C. is no longer at her VDT only by reading a coy, ambiguous letter from "The Andrews Family" reproduced opposite the copyright page. *Dawn* was actually written by Andrew Neiderman, but his name isn't on the cover.

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Just because this subterfuge involves a book rather than a cure for psoriasis doesn't make it any less a consumer fraud. Nor is it the same as the practice of hiring a writer to compose sequels about popular characters after their creator's demise, as in the case of L. Frank Baum, Ian Fleming, Margaret Mitchell and others. The retreads are usually inferior to the originals, but at least their buyers know who wrote them. In the Andrews case even readers who parse the fine print inside can't be entirely sure. The letter says that during her last illness Andrews worked furiously "hoping to finish as many stories as possible so that her fans could one day share them." After she passed on, the family says, it carefully selected a writer "to organize and complete Virginia's stories and to expand upon them by creating additional novels inspired by her wonderful storytelling genius."

Is the Andrews affair a unique case of commercial necrophilia or the beginning of a trend? None of the industry spokespersons quoted in a *New York Times* story seemed fazed by the scandal. Indeed, it was ensconced in a bland business section story about the success of posthumously published books.

That this incident aroused so little protest is a sad commentary on the state of the arts, although perhaps it is to be expected in a conglomerated culture where marketing is the test of success. Authors are demeaned when publishers regard them as something to be canned and sold like peas after they're dead. Readers are demeaned when they are exploited as a manipulable mass of glazed-eyed page-turners. And the entire culture is degraded when publishers care more about their balance sheets than the integrity of the written word.

Back to Attica

On February 27 a federal appellate court in Manhattan finally cleared the way for a seventeen-year-old class-action suit, brought on behalf of some 1,200 inmates involved in the 1971 uprising at the Attica Correctional Facility, to go to trial. Denying the claims of the defendants—former New York State Correction Commissioner Russell Oswald, former Superintendent Vincent Mancusi and former Assistant Deputy Superintendent Karl Pfeil—that they were entitled to immunity from suit, the three-judge panel held that such a defense did not apply to charges that the officials failed to plan for the inmates' medical needs after the retaking of the prison's D yard and that they condoned, tacitly or otherwise, bestial reprisals. The case was remanded to the lower court in Buffalo for a "prompt trial."

In a last-ditch effort to avoid the trial, the three defendants had urged the court to disregard as "unworthy of belief" a number of affidavits in which inmates stated that the three officials had stood by while hundreds of inmates were beaten or brutalized. The tribunal, in its unanimous opinion, noted that "there is considerable irony in the argument of prison officials, who have in their custody scores of prisoners convicted on the testimony of disreputable criminals, that the testimony of criminals is incredible as a matter of law when it accuses them of unconstitutional conduct."

It is expected that the trial will begin in May or June and last for as long as six months. Twenty years after what the appellate court referred to as "the tragic episode with which the name 'Attica' is likely to be forever identified," the truth about the massive assault on September 13, 1971, may at last be unearthed. The case has been kept alive these many years by Elizabeth Fink and other volunteer attorneys. The witnesses, who will be drawn from the ranks of the surviving plaintiffs, the observers, the National Guard, prison officials and medical personnel, will testify to what really took place during and immediately after the awful events of that September 13.

I was one of the observers requested by the inmates who watched state troopers, corrections officers and sheriff's deputies stream into the prison that morning, some shouting, "Save me a nigger!" and who heard the crackle of gunfire over the noise of the rotors of the hovering helicopters, which had already dropped their load of Mace-like gas. I will never forget the anguish and bitterness that I, and my colleagues, felt. For four days, our hastily assembled and disparate group had tried to prevent just such a denouement. Our failure was horribly illustrated by the corpses of twenty-nine prisoners and ten hostages, all killed by state-issued double-0 buckshot and dumdum bullets.

We had no way of knowing that the authorities who planned the assault had failed to provide adequate medical resources for the inevitable wounded after the shooting stopped. (Only two prison doctors were on hand, and no blood supplies.) We also were given no hint of the brutality that would be visited on the inmates as soon as D yard had been retaken, although it was as obvious to us as it should have been to the corrections officers that, given the anger of the state forces, it was likely to occur. Now for the first time it will be possible to lift the curtain drawn over Attica for too many years and expose how easy it was for men to shed the veneer of civilization and step back into the primordial. The lessons of that revelation will, I hope, extend far beyond Attica's walls and watchtowers.

WILLIAM M. KUNSTLER

William M. Kunstler is vice president and volunteer staff attorney at the Center for Constitutional Rights.

Next Steps

(*Continued From Front Cover*)

practically from scratch, and in a great hurry. Despite a slow start, it did succeed in getting its message across.

The peace movement labored under some self-imposed liabilities, however. These included its failure, over the past twenty years, to educate the grass roots about the political realities of the Middle East and about the U.S. role there of sustaining unjust and unstable systems of power. The movement also failed to articulate a post–cold war analysis that incorporated such developments as the spread of nuclear, chemical and high-tech conventional weapons to emerging Third World powers. As a result, it had no credible response to the Administration's claim that Iraq possessed a large and powerful military arsenal, and so could not effectively coun-

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ter the calls for a pre-emptive war against Saddam Hussein. Instead, activists fell back on the ritualistic sloganeering of the Vietnam era (for example, the widely used phrase "no blood for oil"), thereby confirming the media's cynical view that antiwar demonstrations were a quaint anachronism.

In the future, self-education about the Middle East and in-depth analysis of the changing world security equation must be a top priority of the peace movement. Although our constituency will no doubt be smaller than it was at the height of the nuclear freeze movement, it must be a knowledgeable and thoughtful constituency, capable of addressing the difficult issues of the post-gulf war era.

Despite its marginalization by the media over the past two months, the peace movement has important things to say about the troubled world of the 1990s, and we should be aggressive in getting our ideas disseminated. The new political arena is not familiar to most Americans, so we will be listened to if we have cogent and timely things to say. In voicing our concerns, we should not allow ourselves to be paralyzed by the premature obituaries in the press of the "Vietnam syndrome" and the stories about America's new-found infatuation with the military. Certainly there is widespread support for the military and for the war against Iraq. But most Americans now want U.S. troops home from the gulf and also seek assurances that mobilizations of this sort will not be needed again. Moreover, resistance to U.S. involvement in Vietnam-like counterinsurgency operations (e.g., in Peru, Central America or the Philippines) remains strong. Thus, we can gain support from many Americans by repudiating a "world policeman" role and by calling for regional arms-control accords in areas of tension.

What, then, are the issues on which we should speak out in this new climate? Several head the list:

Reduce global militarization. The Persian Gulf conflict erupted because greedy and unscrupulous arms merchants (including companies in the United States, France and Germany) were willing to sell Saddam nearly any military system he wanted, and because governments of both West and East had become addicted to the use of arms transfers as an instrument of power and influence in the Middle East. This has not been a significant peace movement issue until now—but we must make it one. Global demilitarization, nuclear/chemical nonproliferation and arms export restraint should be the centerpieces of a new peace movement strategy.

Achieve reconciliation in the Middle East. In the wake of the gulf war, we must campaign for the resolution without bloodshed of other key conflicts in the Middle East, notably the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Now that the menace posed by Saddam has been neutralized, there is no longer any excuse for Israel to refuse to grant justice and self-determination to the Palestinians as demanded by several United Nations resolutions. The peace movement should lead the call for Palestinian statehood in the West Bank and Gaza, accompanied by ironclad guarantees of Israeli security.

At the same time, and in accordance with the push for global demilitarization, we should insist on the negotiation of regional disarmament measures under which *all* states of the region (including Israel) agree to eliminate their weapons of mass destruction (under careful international inspection) and to replace offensively oriented armies with defensive forces.

Finally, we must sensitize our fellow Americans to the terrible punishment wreaked on Iraqi civilians—most of whom bore no love for Saddam and supported the occupation of Kuwait under duress. Perhaps 100,000 Iraqis have been killed during Operation Desert Storm, and many more were wounded, made into orphans, or left sick and homeless. These people deserve help from the international community.

Rescue the home front. It is no secret that many of the young men and women who participated in Desert Storm hail from rural and urban communities (particularly black communities) that have been totally devastated by ten years of Reaganomics and recession—hence these youngsters' presence in the military, the job of last resort for young Americans without a decent future at home. Given the S&L bailout and the costs of Desert Storm, it is unlikely that these communities will fare any better in the 1990s than they did in the 1980s. Thus, along with health and education benefits for all G.I.s, we should demand that Congress honor these young people by taking money from the defense budget and putting it into economic reconstruction at home.

Put nuclear arms control back on track. While most Americans' attention was riveted on developments in the gulf, the Administration quietly allowed our relationship with the Soviet Union to deteriorate—putting into jeopardy many nuclear arms-reduction efforts initiated during the Reagan period. The START treaty is at risk of being left unfinished and other arms-control negotiations of being abandoned. Despite all the talk of a new, post-cold war era, a resurgence of the nuclear arms race could easily occur. It is essential that the peace movement reactivate antinuclear sentiment in this country and campaign for key arms-control measures.

Together, these four concerns represent the core of a new strategy for the peace movement. Such a strategy will not erase the sadness stemming from our inability to prevent the Persian Gulf war but should provide the movement with a credible and important agenda for this postwar era.

Michael T. Klare is Associate Professor of Peace and World Security Studies at Hampshire College.

★

A Short Military Biography of Saddam Hussein

This guy who often said he'd smash us
flat in one battle
Turned out to be what Texans call
all hat and no cattle.

Calvin Trillin

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MINORITY REPORT.

CHRISTOPHER HITCHENS

The future lay with Major Kitchener and his Maxim-Nordenfeld guns. . . . At any rate it had all ended very happily—in a glorious slaughter of twenty thousand Arabs, a vast addition to the British Empire, and a step in the peerage for Sir Evelyn Baring.

—*"The End of General Gordon" in Lytton Strachey's* Eminent Victorians

In their anxiety to do nothing that can be construed as reminiscent of Indochina, U.S. military authorities are avoiding anything in the nature of a "body count" for Operation Desert Storm. Saudi sources have spoken of Iraqi casualties, for soldiers only, in the range of 80,000 to 100,000. Other estimates put the toll as low as 50,000. We may—since nobody's counting—never know. And it will be for the Iraqi people to decide how many of those deaths are on what might be called Saddam Hussein's conscience. What interests me, very much, is the butcher's bill presented to Iraq *after* its acceptance of U.N. Resolution 660 and its offer to withdraw from Kuwait under international supervision.

That offer was made through Soviet mediation on February 21. On February 26 the following dispatch was filed from the deck of the U.S.S. Ranger, under the byline of Randall Richard of the *Providence Journal*:

> Air strikes against Iraqi troops retreating from Kuwait were being launched so feverishly from this carrier today that pilots said they took whatever bombs happened to be closest to the flight deck.

The crews, working to the strains of the *Lone Ranger* theme, often passed up the projectile of choice, the Rockeye cluster bomb, because it took too long to load. Describing the scene on the jammed roads out of Kuwait, pilot Brian Kasperbauer exulted: "This was the road to Daytona Beach at Spring Break; just bumper to bumper. Spring Break's over." Others spoke of the massacre in a predetermined vernacular, calling it a "turkey shoot" and referring to "fish in a barrel." So it seems odd that the President who ordered the assault should now say, with that enthusiasm of his that seems so infectious, "By God, we've kicked the Vietnam syndrome once and for all." I'd say that Lieutenant Kasperbauer had the symptoms of the Vietnam syndrome pretty comprehensively.

The President should have a sharp word to say to Army Sgt. Roy Brown, who was on the ground at Mutlaa at the scene that the pilots had created. "I got a little bit sick when I saw this," he said. "This" was mass burial by the roadside and heaps of bodies. Pull yourself together, Sergeant Brown! This is no time for sickly introspection and Vietnam masochism! Remember Admiral Dewey at Manila Bay in 1898. "You may fire when you are ready, Gridley," he remarked before sending the Spanish fleet to the bottom in a leisurely fashion: what might be called the Philippines syndrome. As General Neal coyly allowed in his post-turkey shoot briefing of March 1, "We might have created a picture that they had a better capability than they really possessed." No doubt.

On the night of the Soviet-brokered Iraqi acceptance of Resolution 660, I had a television debate with Senator John McCain, the Republican hawk from Arizona and (as well as leading Keating-fancier) a prominent enemy of the Vietnam syndrome. He thought the Administration could, and probably should, accept the withdrawal offer. So did the moderators, Patrick Buchanan and Michael Kinsley. So let it be remembered that on the eve of the turkey shoot the political heirs of Barry Goldwater, Joseph McCarthy and Adlai Stevenson all thought that a solution short of slaughter was possible and desirable. I felt surreal and lonely as I argued that the Bush-Quayle team would reject the deal. Kuwait was a sideshow to them. They wanted to give the troops some desert-fighting experience (after all, America is going to be in this region for a long time to come) and they wanted, in Bush's words, to show that "what we say goes."

It now seems that on their way out of Kuwait the Iraqi forces indulged in an additional saturnalia of looting and mayhem. Why should this in retrospect license the turkey shoot? If they had been withdrawing under international guarantee, how would they have dared to behave in this fashion? But having offered to withdraw, and been told that, no, they had to be driven out, what disincentive existed? If Bush had cared for Kuwait and the Kuwaitis (and the families of the few slain American soldiers), might he not have tried to spare them this final paroxysm? Instead, Iraqis were told that withdrawal was not good enough because they had also to accept all U.N. resolutions enforcing 660 (such as Resolution 665, which calls on member states to allow the inspection of ships' cargoes, or Resolution 674, which calls for the release of foreign nationals and the protection of diplomatic and consular facilities, or Resolution 677, which mandates the Secretary General to safeguard a smuggled copy of Kuwait's population register).

I look forward to the editions of *Sesame Street* and other special programming in place of cartoon fare in which American children will have the turkey shoot explained to them. I look forward to more statements from American peaceniks explaining how it is that they support the troops but not the war. I especially look forward to fresh Augustinian tautologies from our churchmen about proportionality in a just war. But perhaps we may be relieved of the necessity for these reassurances. After all, if no misgivings are expressed, where is the need for rationalization?

I began with Lytton Strachey because this year of grace 1991 is the year in which the United States has become the direct inheritor of the British Empire in the Middle East. From ruling by unsavory proxies (such as, before August 2 last, the vile Saddam himself) we have moved into a period of direct engagement and permanent physical presence. Moments like this are traditionally marked by some condign lesson being meted out to the locals. The fantastic, exemplary bloodletting that took place after the ostensible issue of the conflict had been decided was in that tradition. I can hardly wait for the parades. And I now know what the boring catch phrase of the day really means. It means an Order imposed by the New World.

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LETTER FROM EUROPE

Braving Bush's New World Order

DANIEL SINGER

The Soviet Union can no longer act as a brake on U.S. expansion, and Western Europe cannot do so yet. That is the bitter, bloody and understated lesson of the current crisis. As the willful destruction in the Persian Gulf draws to an end; as our ministers and mediamen, having double-thought and double-talked beyond Orwell's imagination, cynically proclaim that might is right; and as the population laps it all up with patriotic fervor, there is a great temptation to blame the bloodthirsty gods or the folly of humankind. It is more useful, however, to examine the causes of Russia's weakness and of Europe's abject abdication, and to seek behind these failures the political and social forces that may be capable of challenging President Bush's "new world order," which is as old as capitalism and as modern as a laser-guided missile.

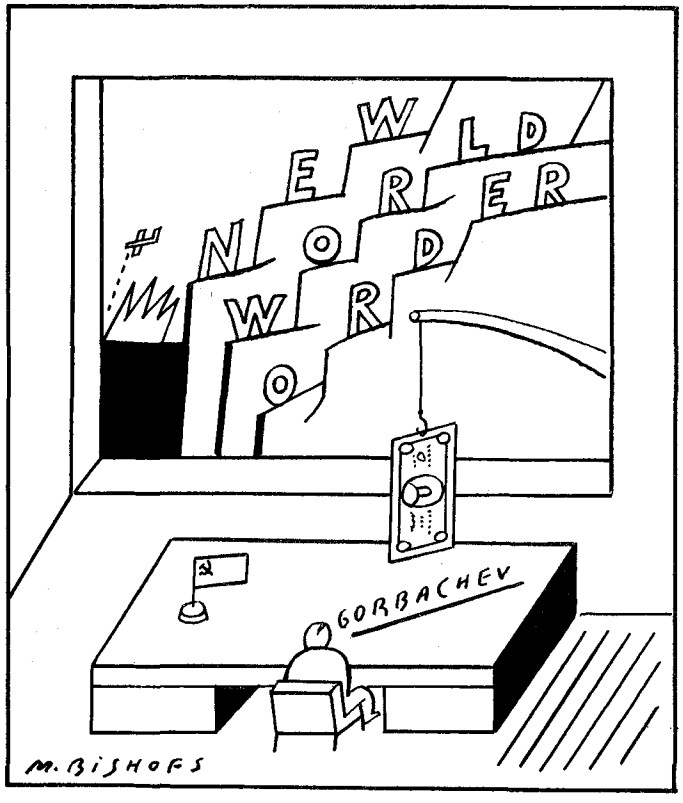
The Limits of 'New Thinking'

The Soviet government "regrets" but it "does not condemn . . ." This refrain sums up the dilemma that was revealed in two dramatic weeks in February, when the world saw both Mikhail Gorbachev's skill and the real limits to his diplomatic action. Soviet involvement began much earlier, of course. From last August it was crucial. Above all it was precious for George Bush, who could not have disguised U.S. intervention as a United Nations operation without the blessing of Gorbachev. In return the Soviet leader was promised economic rewards and shown immediate consideration, notably over his troubles with the Baltic States. But as the war heated up, he grasped that he had struck a bad bargain. The Soviet press began to suggest that the destruction of Iraq by the United States and its allies was going beyond the U.N. resolutions. On February 12, judging the Iraqis ripe, Gorbachev sent his personal envoy, Yevgeny Primakov, to Baghdad. Three days later Iraq publicly envisaged the possibility of accepting Resolution 660, which called for the unconditional evacuation of Kuwait. By Monday, February 18, Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz was in Moscow studying the Gorbachev peace plan, which the Soviet leader duly communicated to Washington and other Western capitals.

The Americans (who, we now know, had already set the date of the ground war) were enraged by this threat to their schedule. Bush's first instinct was to reply, We want Saddam Hussein's scalp and nobody is going to stop us. Under the influence of his advisers, however, he chose to rely first on the Soviet Union's obvious reluctance to risk an open break with Washington. The Soviet pupil was told to amend his copy and duly did so. By Thursday Aziz was back in Moscow. The next day Gorbachev produced a revised plan, which included a timetable for Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait: four days to leave Kuwait City and twenty-one to abandon the entire country. That Friday, however, Bush, with the obedient allies lined up behind him, delivered his ultimatum: Within twenty-four hours Iraq had to accept the Western terms—allowing a week for total evacuation—or all hell would break loose. Even then Gorbachev did not give up. He spent the final Saturday calling Western leaders, pleading personally with Bush to put the decision off by a day or two in order to find a compromise between the two proposals. He allowed his ambassador to the U.N. to tell the Security Council that the parting words of Aziz suggested Iraq would accept such a compromise. To no avail. Gorbachev was coolly thanked for his services by the Americans and dismissed.

What should we have expected the Soviet leader to do? My own opinion is that a socialist leader should have retrospectively condemned Soviet aid to the semifascist regime of Saddam; condemned with equal vigor the Kuwaiti and Saudi oligarchies and their close ties to Western oil and financial interests; and spoken to the Arab and Western peoples above the heads of their governments. But Moscow, I recognize, long ago ceased to use such language—and not with the advent of Gorbachev but with the rise of Stalin. Even leaving such dreams aside, there was still scope for a different line, if only the Soviet diplomats, instead of bothering about U.S. sensibilities, had chosen not to waffle but to speak their mind.

With hindsight, Gorbachev must now regret having voted last November for Resolution 678, which gave the coalition



ILLUSTRATIONS BY MARIS BISHOFS

Daniel Singer is The Nation*'s Europe correspondent.*

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the green light to strike. Yet even later, in the debate over the ultimatum, the Soviet delegate could have acted differently. He could have told the Security Council that the refusal to seek a compromise proved that the real goal was to bring down Saddam and destroy Iraq; he could have asked the Secretary General to confirm that those were not the aims of the U.N. resolution; and he could have made it plain to the world that the United States and its twenty-eight partners were going to war under their own banner. But it was impossible to say all that and at the same time repeat, like Gorbachev, that "the course toward developing cooperation with the U.S.A. and improving relations is vitally essential." In fact, there was no need to debunk the U.S. claims. On Tuesday, February 26, with Iraq ready to accept any terms and the Soviet Union pleading for a cease-fire, Bush and his accomplices dropped all pretense about the U.N. and their own past pledges. Instead, they merely offered variations on the theme of La Fontaine's fable: "The reason of the strongest is always the best"—until the Republican Guard was crushed, that is, when they could afford to be righteous again. Speaking in Minsk that same day, Gorbachev showed his pique by hinting at the "fragility" of Soviet-American relations.

Soviet politicians have now grasped that one can't aspire to membership in the I.M.F. and *clash with U.S. interests.*

Even this modest degree of Soviet interference is attributed by most Western commentators to the pressure on Gorbachev from the military lobby. But this view is less than convincing. Admittedly the Soviet Union is split down the middle and passions are running high, with the army paper *Krasnaya Zvezda* hankering openly for the good old days when Iraq was a close ally and the generals talking already of the need for more sophisticated weapons. Nevertheless, when one considers that the war has come within 200 miles of the Soviet frontier, that the Soviet Union has a population of some 50 million Muslims in its southern regions and that it has maintained a political presence in the Middle East for more than thirty-five years, there is no need to point to the military lobby to explain Gorbachev's efforts. The best evidence is that former Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, the prime opponent of that lobby, approved the Soviet leader's peace proposals.

Gorbachev emerges from this battle bruised and wiser. In the Middle East the consequences for Moscow will cut both ways. The popularity of the Soviet Union should rise among millions of Muslims—if only by contrast with the United States, Britain and France. On the other hand, its reputation as a superpower able to stand up to the United States will collapse. It is at home, however, that the impact will be strongest. All Soviet politicians have now grasped that one cannot aspire to membership in the International Monetary Fund *and* clash with U.S. interests. A junior partner does have some autonomy, but it is limited. This factor will figure in the reassessment of values taking place as part of the "political cold war" now being waged in the Soviet Union.

The Taming of Mitterrand

With the Soviet Union abandoning its role as a superpower, Western Europe was supposed to become the new challenger to American domination. But that myth has been shattered by the current crisis. Europe's submission could best be seen in the figure of François Mitterrand, once the maverick, standing to attention in the American contingent next to John Major. True, the French President's gestures in the past were often just that—gestures. But at least France did not speak with an American accent. It was in favor of a Middle East conference that would include the Palestinian question, and Paris emphasized that the objective of the U.N. was "to liberate Kuwait" and nothing more. The French government soon had to eat its words. The paradox reached its sordid climax when Gorbachev offered his peace plan, milder than Mitterrand's had been in mid-January, and the French Foreign Minister, toeing the American line, had to explain that it was unacceptable.

The *volte-face* was so manifest that Mitterrand himself chose to explain it to a group of journalists on French television on February 24. He hinted, *en passant*, that the extension of the time granted to Iraqi troops for evacuation, from four days to seven days, was the result of French influence. It was impossible to go beyond that, he maintained, because of climatic imperatives. He got away with this because no one asked him why there had been no effort to reach a compromise with the Russians over the withdrawal period. But the rapid pace of events gave the game away. Two days later the Iraqis were ready for any concessions, but Paris had altered its demands: Iraq was now bound to accept all twelve U.N. resolutions. The French had simply joined the American chorus chanting *Vae victis* and pressing on to crush Saddam's Republican Guard. No doubt the eloquent French President will find a smooth explanation for this in his next TV performance.

The total subservience to the United States is all the more puzzling considering that France had so much to lose in the process. Ever since Charles de Gaulle distanced himself from Israel, France has enjoyed some sympathy in the Arab world. Above all, it has deep, if ambiguous, connections with North Africa. While resentful of the former colonial power, most lay liberals in Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia were brought up on the ideas of the French Revolution and had strong links with the French left. They now feel most betrayed by France's double standards, indifference and eloquent silence while Iraq was being pounded, the difference in the French responses to Israeli and Palestinian victims. The West as a whole will pay a high moral price in the Arab world for its military victory, but France will pay more than Britain or the United States because more was expected from its Socialist government.

Mitterrand had a golden opportunity here to assert the autonomy of Europe. Admittedly, from the start it was clear that the British were the United States' obedient servants. But other members of the European Community were less com-

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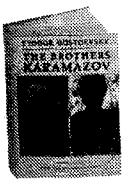

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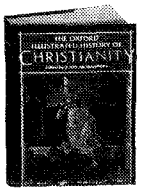

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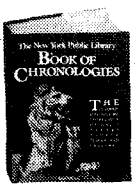

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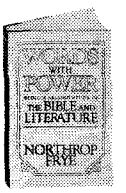

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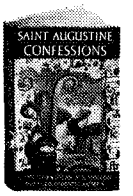

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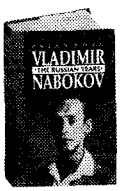

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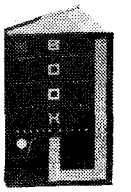

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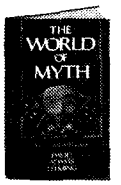

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pliant. When Gorbachev put forward his peace plan, it was warmly welcomed by the Germans and approved by the Spanish government and the Italian Parliament. If France had taken the lead, it might at least have influenced Bush. Why did it not even try?

The billion dollars offered to France by the Kuwaitis and the prospect of juicy markets in the Persian Gulf are insufficient explanation, although the influence and enthusiasm of the big French exporters should not be underestimated. (When *Forbes* described the poor performance of French weapons in Iraqi hands, the French newspapers dismissed this as the bias of a competitor; clearly nothing will discourage the greed of the arms merchants.) A more complete explanation, however, must take into account the personality of the French President. Mitterrand was never a nationalist in the Gaullist sense of the term. He was always an "Atlanticist"—a European who took U.S. leadership of the alliance for granted. After all, it was he who proved Ronald Reagan's best ally in the battle over the Euromissiles.

Yet one should really move beyond Mitterrand and beyond France's frontiers. The tentative conclusion to be drawn from this crisis is that Europe will not stand up to the United States unless it simultaneously tries to forge a society fundamentally different from the American model.

Puppets and Protagonists

It used to be an axiom of the left that the real choice was between the United Socialist States of Europe and Europe of the United States. Later, socialism receded ever further over the horizon, while the economic balance of power shifted gradually away from the United States to Europe and Japan. This gave birth to the idea—now shaken by the gulf war—of a united capitalist Europe capable of defying the United States. This is not to say that conflicts of interest will vanish, as we saw when Germany raised interest rates while the United States was lowering them. Nor does it mean that Europe will never shake off American hegemony. But it will probably not do so in the present historical period.

Sensing the danger presented by the end of the cold war, the United States acted swiftly. If Saddam had not existed, it would have been necessary to invent him. The Iraqi leader not only enabled Washington to strengthen its command over the world's principal energy resources and to provide fat new contracts, notably to the worried arms manufacturers; he also made it possible to argue that the capitalist system, extended to the entire world by virtue of the Soviet Union's surrender, requires a military alliance, with the United States as its obvious leader. It is this new world order that Mitterrand and company did not dare oppose.

The only ones who dared to dissent were people who also oppose the domestic consensus. The antiwar movement in Europe is inspired by all sorts of pacifists, by remnants of the far left, by Greens of all complexion, by Communists at variance on this occasion with the Moscow line, by Socialist rebels defying the party whip in the wake of Tony Benn in Britain or Jean-Pierre Chevènement in France. The movement is strongest in Germany, quite effective in Italy and Spain, less so in France and Britain. Undoubtedly, it could be stronger. Contending with the full propaganda machine of the establishment is only part of its problem. Is it because of the repugnant nature of the Iraqi regime, or the understandable guilt over the millions of Jews murdered here in Europe, or the occasional inability of the peace movement to show that its revulsion at this war, its aims and its horrors implies no indulgence for Saddam Hussein? Whatever the reasons, many people who know better—and have done better in the past—now find themselves outside the movement. To give but a couple of examples: Wolf Biermann, the singer who left East Germany but kept his socialist principles, and Pierre Vidal-Naquet, who spoke out bravely against French torture during the Algerian war.

The antiwar movement, such as it is, is the nucleus of a potential opposition. Significantly, it is made up of "outcasts and outsiders"—not quite in the sense in which Herbert Marcuse used to describe people outside the main process of production but rather in the sense of groups, parties and people outside the political mainstream. Whether one looks at Russia or at Western Europe, the capacity to resist Bush's new order seems to be connected to the rejection of capitalism and the readiness to search for an alternative society.

Since this sounds rather abstract, I can perhaps make the same point in another way by describing a lesser event, one that was overshadowed by the war in the gulf. This was the death and transformation of the Italian Communist Party. Born in Livorno in January 1921, the P.C.I. died in Rimini exactly seventy years later, only to be resurrected at once as the Democratic Party of the Left. At its January congress, party leader Achille Occhetto chose to have the party come out against the war, the only big European party to do so. This transformed the mood of the congress. The left was pleased, which may explain why only a small fraction decided not to join the renamed party. Occhetto's right-wing allies in the party, on the other hand, were peeved, and while I have little sympathy for these so-called *miglioristi*, I must admit they had a point. The purpose of the name change, they argued, was not just to drop the word "Communist" from the title but to move the party into the political mainstream. Opposing the war means again becoming the odd party out.

The implication is that if you join the consensus, you must accept American leadership and the American war. The message addressed to Occhetto can now be extended to the en-

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tire Western left: Are you still ready, despite the odds, to seek a radical alternative or are you resigned to taking up your appointed place in George Bush's new world order?

While the warmongers gloat, the struggle must go on, with its hours of hope and moments of despair. Twenty-three years ago the Tet offensive shattered the myth of U.S. invincibility, and young people all over the world, inspired by the Vietnamese, moved to the attack. An old slogan again echoed across Europe: "Run, comrade, run, the old world is behind you." This time around the U.S. establishment had an easier task, since it confronted not a revolutionary people in arms but an allegedly mighty regular army, driven to disaster by a madman. In this different mood and circumstance the slogan, too, must be altered: Wake up, comrade, wake up, because the old world—in a new disguise but with its weaponry in full barbarian splendor—is ahead of you. □

NOW THAT WE'VE FREED KUWAIT

Liberate the District

JAMIN B. RASKIN

If you were the President waging a high-risk war and you wanted to minimize political fallout, you might call up National Guard units from a federal jurisdiction whose people have no vote in either house of Congress, no voice in the Senate and no real power in the nation's affairs. That is, you might lean heavily on the soldiers-in-waiting from the District of Columbia. Well, what do you know, *The Washington Post* reports that the armed forces called up proportionately more Guard members and reservists from the nation's capital for Desert Storm than they did from forty-seven states. The people of D.C. committed nearly 900 reservists to the operation, more in real numbers than were sent by sixteen states. These sons and daughters of the District, overwhelmingly African-American and working-class, went to fight in a war decided on by other people's representatives in Congress, the body that controls the District, excludes its representatives and continues to sit on its petition for statehood.

The close of the war brings the strange semicolonial status of the District into sharp relief: taxation, military service and governance without representation. District residents not only fought in this war they had no vote on but helped pay for it. More than a billion dollars a year in federal taxes is taken in from the District; that is more per capita than is paid by the people of forty-eight states and more in hard dollars than the people of eight states pay. When there is a draft, the people of D.C. are subject to it, as with all federal laws. And yet, 607,000 D.C. residents are not only locked out of the Senate, forced to depend on a single nonvoting delegate in the House, but have almost none of the fundamental rights of self-

Jamin B. Raskin is an assistant professor of law at American University.

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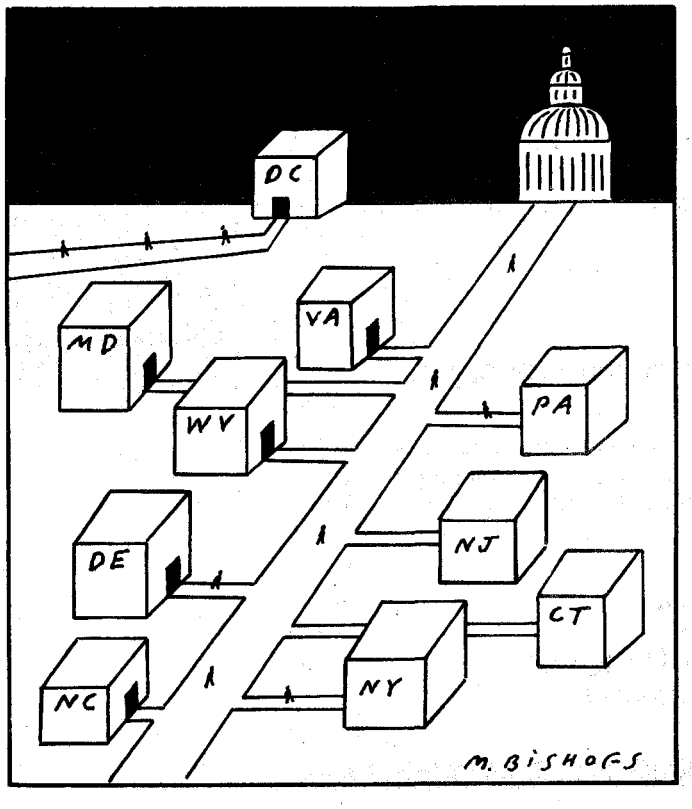
government that attach to the people of the states. Under D.C.'s limited home-rule regime, all bills passed by the city's Council and signed by the Mayor must go to Congress before they become law, and Congress can choose at any time for any reason to supplant the local government and legislate for the District. Indeed, Congress may pass one federal law for the people of the United States and a completely different one for the people of the District without violating equal protection.

Over the past decade, Congress has used this "plenary power" over the District to impose a cluster of pet right-wing agendas on this progressive city. For almost a decade, Congress has prohibited the District from using federal funds for most abortions and in 1989 even voted to stop the District from spending locally raised funds for abortions for poor women. In 1981 Congress kicked off a decade of homophobic interference with the city when it stopped the District from decriminalizing consensual gay sex. In 1988 Congress forced the District Council to change its human rights law to permit religious institutions such as Georgetown University and The Catholic University of America to discriminate against student groups advocating gay rights or practices. Congress also forced the Council to repeal a law making it illegal for life insurance companies to require HIV testing as a condition for insurance coverage.

These interventions are conservative crowd-pleasers back home that lawmakers purchase on the cheap. Senators like Jesse Helms score points with conservative constituents without provoking strong reaction from liberals in their states, who are not directly affected and do not follow District affairs. But federal interference goes beyond sensational social issues to micromanagement of the very fabric of everyday life. Congress has prevented the District from installing meters in taxicabs, banned advertisements for the lottery on public transportation, closed the Woodrow Wilson High School swimming pool after 9 P.M. and overturned the city's law requiring city government workers to live in the District. The pattern of federal control is so pervasive that Congress now works its way by mere threats. On February 5, for example, the D.C. Council surrendered one of the strongest antigun laws in the country, holding gun manufacturers and dealers liable for harm caused by assault weapons, because Mayor Sharon Pratt Dixon feared that the law would antagonize pro-gun forces in Congress and jeopardize hopes for a greater federal payment to the city, which has been frozen for the past five years. (This payment is for local services rendered to the federal government and for taxes the city loses because of the federal presence and federal control.)



The District's population has traditionally suffered these indignities with a remarkable restraint bordering on masochism. The city hosts marches for almost every cause in the world, but there have been no marches (in my memory at least, and I was born there) in Washington for the rights of the people of Washington, much less for statehood. Most members of the Council have not figured out whether to be servile administrators of the federal territory who tiptoe around the Capitol or independent leaders of the statehood movement determined to challenge and defy these unjust arrangements. While liberal on many issues, the white population, concentrated in the northwest quadrant, experiences Congressional insults with equanimity because many whites do not identify with local (as opposed to federal) Washington and fear losing Congress as a chaperone in this 66 percent African-American city. Many in the (white and African-American) middle class worry that statehood would lead to higher taxes, despite the fact that a recent study showed that statehood would mean lower taxes and greater financial self-sufficiency for the local government. Meanwhile, the working-class majority of the African-American population in the District is simply struggling to keep above water in a city overrun by drugs, guns, crime, poor schools and hard times.

Despite all these obstacles, there is an unprecedented stirring in Washington that is likely to gather force because of the gulf war. The District's new nonvoting delegate to Congress, Eleanor Holmes Norton, has made several impassioned statements on the floor of the House about the irony of Washingtonians fighting for self-determination for people abroad when they are denied it at home. Jesse Jackson has also been vigilant on this point, pressing statehood at the big antiwar marches in January and in weekly town meetings carried on the radio. He remarked at American University recently that "we don't even get to vote on the wars that the children of Washington are sent to fight." Jackson, who was elected Statehood Senator (the press calls him "shadow Senator") from the District in November to lobby Congress to approve D.C.'s petition, promises to focus national attention on the disfranchisement of more than half a million Americans, a population, Jackson likes to point out, larger than that of Alaska, Vermont and Wyoming. As the Democrats head into the 1992 elections with no clear leader and no compelling agenda, the D.C. statehood question can easily become one rallying point for the party's progressive wing. Think of it this way: There

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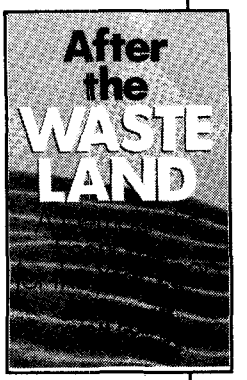

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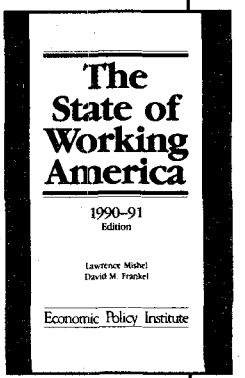

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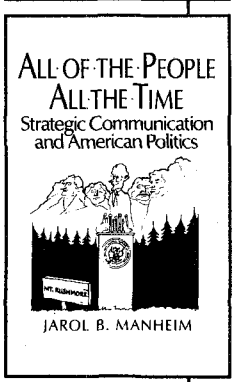

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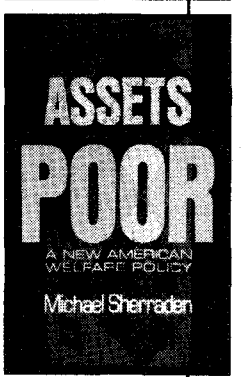

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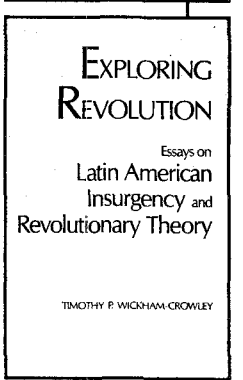

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is not a single African-American senator now, and the override of Bush's veto of the Civil Rights Act of 1990 failed in the Senate by one vote. Statehood for D.C. is an issue of simple justice; it promises to expand not the territory of America but the meaning of democracy within it.

Admission to statehood is a simple bill like any other, requiring only a majority vote of both houses of Congress and a presidential signature. The "New Columbia" statehood bill, introduced by Senators Edward Kennedy and Paul Simon, would redraw the boundaries of the District, leaving the White House, the Capitol and the other federal buildings within the constitutional "Seat of Government" and turning the residential areas into the new state. This is a perfectly constitutional plan with historical precedent in the nineteenth century, when Congress gave much of the land of the District to the Commonwealth of Virginia, clearly establishing Congress's power to redraw the boundaries of the capital city. The support of Virginia Senator Charles Robb and both Maryland Senators, Paul Sarbanes and Barbara Mikulski, for statehood should help significantly in this regard.

The Democratic Party, which controls both houses of Congress, is on record in its national platform as supporting D.C. statehood, but it must be pushed. President Bush has already announced his opposition, stating wrongly that the city gets its funding "almost exclusively" from the federal government (in fact, D.C. receives only 14 percent, and all of it is owed to the city). He has, however, declared his support for Puerto Rican statehood, even though the Puerto Ricans haven't even asked for it yet. Last week, Bush sent a letter to Senator J. Bennett Johnston, chair of the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources, arguing that the Senate's failure to set a statehood referendum in Puerto Rico "will call into question whether we truly believe in self-determination for 3.6 million of our fellow citizens, many of whom have fought America's wars of this century and are fighting today." Good for you, George, but what about your fellow citizens in the District of Columbia, who have fought in every war since the Revolution and have paid billions in federal taxes?

Unlike the people of Puerto Rico, the people of D.C. have already voted for statehood a number of times, approved a state Constitution and petitioned Congress for admission in 1983. They are still waiting for America to open its eyes to the Washington that is not seen from the inside of an air-conditioned tour bus or an official limousine. They are also waiting for progressives around the country to realize the importance of the issue, which surely they would—if only D.C. were a colony of the United States in a foreign land. But if you need an international perspective, consider this: Of all the nations of the world with a republican form of government, from Argentina to Zimbabwe, only the United States denies parliamentary representation to the people who live in its capital city.

Wars have a way of propelling submerged populations forward. The experience of World War II helped push back the walls of discrimination against African-Americans, women and even gays. Returning black Civil War soldiers demanded the right to vote, and their courageous service played a key role not only in the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment but, curiously, even before that, in establishing the right of black males to vote in the District of Columbia. Out of the peril of Desert Storm perhaps now will come the emancipation of American citizens living in D.C. If their colonized situation was at one time a historical accident, it is now an affirmative choice to maintain the political status quo and repress the tremendous progressive potential of a new state. But change is in the air. America can no longer tolerate this absurd political tyranny on the mainland. In this bicentennial year of the founding of the District of Columbia, we can choose to honor justice—and the men and women from Washington who risked their lives in the Persian Gulf operation—by ending second-class citizenship in the shadow of the Capitol. It is time to add the fifty-first star to the flag and expand democracy in the Republic. □

U.S. CULTURAL INVASION

Hungary for American Pop

MIKLÓS VÁMOS

Budapest

A year ago, CNN meant nothing to Hungarians; it sounded like a new brand of detergent. Now everybody knows it's the "world's news leader." Hungary's newly organized private cable companies started broadcasting CNN on the third day of the Persian Gulf war, at the best possible time.

CNN is one of thirteen satellite channels that can be seen now in Budapest and a few other Hungarian cities (most areas are still waiting for cable TV). If you are scanning the other twelve—SAT1, SKY ONE, RTL, PRO7, etc.—you'd believe that there is nothing else in the world but American films and series. For instance, *The Cosby Show*, although still not dubbed into Hungarian, can be seen in German. You can imagine.

A few years ago, Eastern Europeans had to go abroad to see American films or buy American books. Intellectuals made a pilgrimage to cinemas and bookstores to get glimpses of Western culture, and the books they brought back were circulated among friends.

Now U.S. films or books (not, unfortunately, the best ones) are available in unlimited numbers. American investments and tourists are also welcome. At the same time, drugs have become popular. Heavyweight criminals have started to operate in the Eastern European countries where there were no gangs or Mafiosi before. Some of the American films and books that have flooded our cinemas and shop windows might have been used as textbooks by these Hungarian criminals and drug traffickers. Since the old and inefficient educational system and police force are not prepared to fight these modern crimes and habits, they can spread fast, as birthday presents for Hungary's year-old capitalism.

Miklós Vámos writes frequently for The Nation *from Hungary.*

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Movie theaters in Budapest now offer just about the same American films as the theaters of an average U.S. city. *Dick Tracy, Pretty Woman, Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade, Batman, Driving Miss Daisy, Arachnophobia, Back to the Future I-II-III, Rocky IV, Black Rain, Crocodile Dundee I-II, Ghostbusters I-II, Ghost, Police Academy I-II-III . . .*

In January, a total of 157 films were shown in Budapest. Seventy-five of these were American. There was only one Soviet film, *Solaris*, based on a science fiction story by Stanislaw Lem and directed by the formerly banned master Andrei Tarkovsky. Absolutely no Soviet films were available dealing with the "Great Patriotic War" (as the Russians call World War II), the "Great October Revolution" or Lenin. This would not be surprising in Western cities, but it is shocking here.

Right after World War II, Hungarian cinemas were overrun by U.S. films. In 1945 Hungarians could see exactly fifty, most of them older hits: Chaplin, Walt Disney, Tarzan, *Frankenstein . . .* American films were popular and were sometimes shown together with Soviet films. By 1949 the number of U.S. films had fallen to just seven, compared with forty-seven from the Soviet Union. Between 1950 and 1955 there were virtually none, except for *Time in the Sun*—also known as *Que Viva Mexico*—the unfinished film by Sergei Eisenstein, shot in Mexico. It was produced with the assistance of Upton Sinclair. Sinclair, besides being a writer and producer, was the president of the National Council of American-Soviet Friendship.

After the 1956 revolution, U.S. films started to come back to Hungary. It was a very slow and cautious return. *Trapeze* was the first American feature film shown in 1957. Burt Lancaster, Tony Curtis and Gina Lollobrigida, trapeze artists at a Parisian circus, had professional and love problems. Hungarians lined up to see that Western people also have professional and love problems. In 1958 we could see twenty-seven Soviet films, as opposed to eight U.S. movies, most of them old slapstick comedies. The number of U.S. films reached thirty in 1960, while we got fifty-two from the Soviet Union.

In the 1970s, state-run Hungarian TV started to show old U.S. films. American films shown on small and large screens totaled around fifty, but the score of the Soviets was always a little bit higher. By the mid-1980s the score was nearly even, and a few times the Americans won.

In 1991, we might start rooting for a few Soviet (Armenian, Kazakh, Kirghiz, etc.) films—just for a change. We might also root for a few Hungarian films. But the Hungarian national film industry is dying, since the state has stopped backing it, and the audience prefers the American product. The same thing is going on in the bookshops. Books by Stephen King, Robert Ludlum, Michael Crichton, Ken Follett and Mario Puzo are best sellers in Hungary, competing with biographies of Elvis Presley, Elizabeth Taylor and Jacqueline Onassis. American horror stories and pornography are even more popular. Many book jackets feature naked bodies, a sure-fire best seller in Hungary today.

Politics is the runner-up. *Looking Forward*, the autobiography of President Bush, came out last year in Hungarian and sold many copies. Bush wrote it with Victor Gold. Congratulations. But the foreword, "Message to the Hungarian People," is credited to the President alone:

> I know that Hungarians, just like Americans, respect the freedom of politics and economy. Hungarians, just like Americans, want a society in which human rights are unbreakable; where the government comes from the people and is for the people; and where the economy is free from the shackles of state control. The government and people of the United States look forward with confidence to the coming period of mutual understanding and cooperation of our peoples.

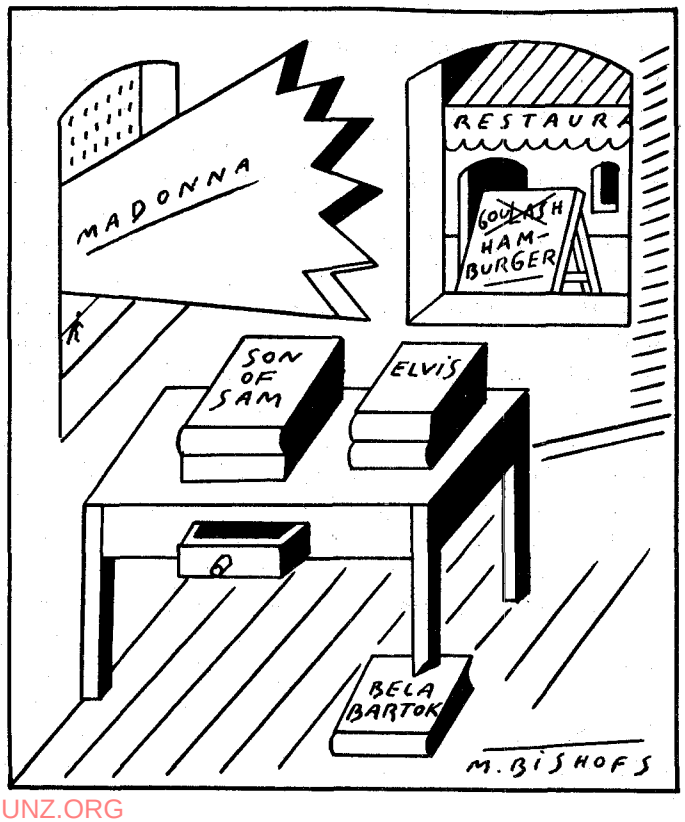
Can we get anything better than this?

Eastern European countries are taking a stab at "mutual understanding and cooperation" with Americans. The prestige of the United States is higher than ever, and the gulf war didn't hurt it at all. Hungarians, Czechoslovaks and Bulgarians try to imitate everything that is American—and I mean *everything*.

The bankrupt economy does not have much of a choice. Most national film studios, publishers and theaters will either be bought up by foreign companies or will disappear altogether. Freedom also means freedom to suffer financial fiasco. The worst financial fiasco is that of the state, and it cannot afford to foot the bill for culture.

The state-run financing system of culture doesn't exist any longer, but neither does any network of foundations and other private funds that can be used, as in the West, to support the arts. Eastern European films and literature cannot compete with their American counterparts. If we keep going on like this, our small countries will gradually lose their national culture. Outstanding Eastern European artists will have to try working abroad, and those who can't may have to abandon their artistic ambitions.

Of course, no one can put the blame on the United States



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for this; Eastern Europeans should defend their own culture. In any case, we like American literature, theater and film very much. And we adore CNN. But the collapse of our culture wouldn't be a big triumph for the United States, as the collapse of socialism was. It would be the first big defeat for these new democracies. A proper balance of national and foreign books, films and traditions shouldn't be too much to ask for. It won't be fun if American culture dominates Eastern Europe for good. Even our American visitors would find it boring. □

COSMETIC SURGERY

Health Care the Corporate Way

COLIN GORDON

Some very strange noises have been emanating from executive suites in recent months on a subject long anathema to corporate America: national health care. Art Puccini, a vice president of General Electric, concedes that rising and uneven costs "may lead some of us who today are free-market advocates to re-examine our thinking and positions with respect to government-sponsored national health insurance." Robert Mercer, a former Goodyear board member and retired chair, now favors such a policy, saying, "There are things that Government must do." Lee Iacocca says flatly that "more and more business people are not just whispering but talking out loud about making health care financing a government responsibility," leading one United Automobile Workers official to remark that the chair of Chrysler sounds "like an Italian socialist."

More accurately, Iacocca and his boardroom brethren are squeezed American capitalists. They feel painted into a corner by the inflation of health care costs, union opposition to concessions on health benefits, marketplace competition and a change in federal accounting rules that will make it impossible to put off financial liability for retiree health care on annual balance sheets. The corporate call for national health insurance is less a coherent policy than an ad hoc, almost panicky response to long-term struggles with cost control and short-term problems of labor relations and federal regulation.

These difficulties stem from several factors, not least the existence of almost 50 million Americans with no regular source of health care—predominantly the working poor, the unemployed, minorities, women and children. Yet the United States spends far more than any other country on medical services. In 1988, health care costs, growing at twice the rate of inflation, totaled $542 billion—12 percent of the gross national product. On a per capita basis, the nation spends 41 percent more than Canada, 85 percent more than France, 131 percent more than Japan and 171 percent more than Britain—all countries that provide universal health care at well below 10 percent of their G.N.P.

The gap between cost and care is perpetuated by the health industry. American doctors and hospitals charge third-party insurers on a fee-for-service basis; insurers pass on higher costs as higher premiums. As in defense contracting, this "cost-plus" structure encourages patients, doctors, hospitals and insurance consumers (usually employers) to milk the system for as much cash and care as they can. In turn, treatment of the un- or underinsured is paid for by inflating costs for a shrinking pool of insured health consumers. And this inflation is fed by high fees for elaborate—and frequently unnecessary—technology and diagnoses. As *The Economist* observed recently, American health care "creates an incentive to treat patients in the most expensive possible way after they become ill. . . . It would be hard to design a better way of inflating spending."

But the health industry, led by the American Medical Association, has fought any attempt to contain health care costs. The A.M.A. spent most of the late 1970s and early 1980s, according to former Representative Toby Moffett of Connecticut, "throwing money at the [House Energy and Commerce] Committee" to defeat bills aimed at containing hospital costs. In the past year, the 288,000-member association has continued to throw its financial weight around in Congressional elections and has launched a major campaign to discredit Canada's national health care system.

The inflationary spiral is central to business perceptions of health care reform. Big companies that provide health insurance desperately want to shuffle the costs of employment-based benefits to workers (through employee contributions or concessions); to consumers (through higher prices); to other industries and firms and direct competitors (through federally mandated insurance); or to all of the above (through tax-financed national health insurance). For employers, "national health care" is a catch phrase for any political means of escaping health care liabilities and the high costs of private insurance.

Flirting with the idea of national medical insurance was not the first corporate reaction to the health care crisis. Indeed, for the past five years much of the business community has been ducking its health care commitments. Richard Heckert, retired chair of Du Pont and president of the National Association of Manufacturers, put it succinctly last fall when he told Congress, "I hope that none of us will abandon our employees, but we are going to cut our losses." Firms have sliced costs by forcing workers to pass rigorous health exams to qualify for "good health rebates," thus making employees prove, in effect, that they won't need care in order to qualify for it. Other companies are hiring their own doctors or forcing employees to choose from a limited pool of "preferred" physicians. For example, under the 1989 A.T.&T. contract, employees not using company-designated doctors must assume 20 percent of health care premiums.

Major strikes in 1989 at A.T.&T., the regional "Baby Bell" phone companies and the Pittston Company, among other firms, were provoked by management attempts to chip away at health benefits. The phone companies were unable to force

Colin Gordon teaches American history at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada.

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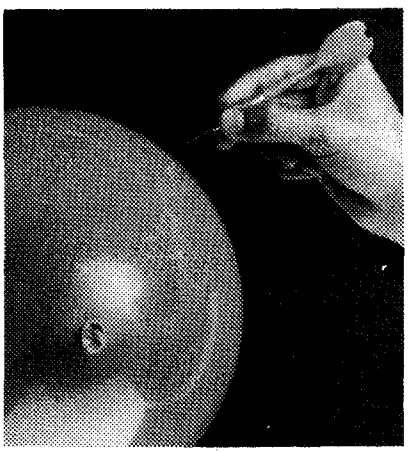

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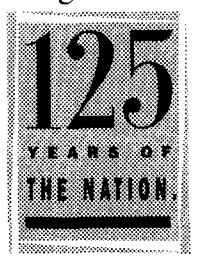

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employees to pick up a percentage of premiums, but the companies achieved higher deductibles and "preferred provider" provisions in the new contracts. The Pittston settlement required the company to maintain health care payments but opened the door to similar strikes throughout the coal industry by allowing Pittston to settle its health care commitments outside the employers' association, which had guaranteed pattern bargaining in the industry. In general, contracts signed in 1989 and the first half of 1990 introduced higher deductibles, caps on the employer's share of health care premiums, and cost sharing or "co-payment" of plans previously funded entirely by employers.

Older unionized firms are also grappling with their bill for retiree health care, a liability they feel crimps their profit margins and makes them less competitive with newer firms, especially nonunion ones. Because of a recent Financial Accounting Standards Board ruling, in 1993 companies will have to begin recording future health care liabilities as they accrue rather than as they are paid. In 1988 American firms paid out $9 billion in health care benefits to their retired workers. However, overall retiree liabilities totaled almost $230 billion, or nearly 10 percent of the stock market value of the companies concerned. Had the F.A.S.B. ruling been in effect in 1988, corporate profits would have been cut by $21 billion (the year's increase in liability). This prospect left *Business Week* worrying that the F.A.S.B. ruling "could virtually wipe out profit as we know it for the top 1,000 public companies."

So far, efforts to escape the pressures of both health care inflation and the F.A.S.B. rule changes have provided little relief. Du Pont's health care bill, now $450 million, grew 15 to 18 percent in each of the past three years, and General Electric's jumped an average of 15 percent per employee in both 1987 and 1988. Those rates are typical for large firms. Many companies have tried to back out of their retirement commitments by settling liabilities for retirement care with a one-time cash payment, the essence of the Pittston settlement; or by forcing employees to finance retiree care either through payroll deductions or out of stock ownership plans. Nevertheless, 54 percent of 1988 retirees under the age of 65 and 45 percent of those over 65 continue to qualify for company care, down only 10 percent from 1986 levels. And the tremendous losses suffered by Pittston during the 1989 strike have left few employers with the stomach to risk similar showdowns over health care. "They say, 'What do we do now?' " notes one benefits consultant, mimicking his corporate clients, "and I smile and say, 'Write your Congressman and ask for national health insurance.' "

While Congressional mailboxes may be filling up with impressive letterheads, there is little business unity on the health care issue. Those who see no way out of the trap of inflated costs and contract commitments favor some federal contribution to employment-based health care. Others, more concerned about the uneven provision of health care within the business community than their own long-term commitments, favor federally mandated health insurance for all firms. These positions are further divided by competitive concerns within and among different industries. Corporate interests pushing for some form of national health care agree on only a few buzzwords and

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vague goals, and are bound together by little more than the desire to spread the costs of health care to consumers, workers, the state or (ironically) one another.

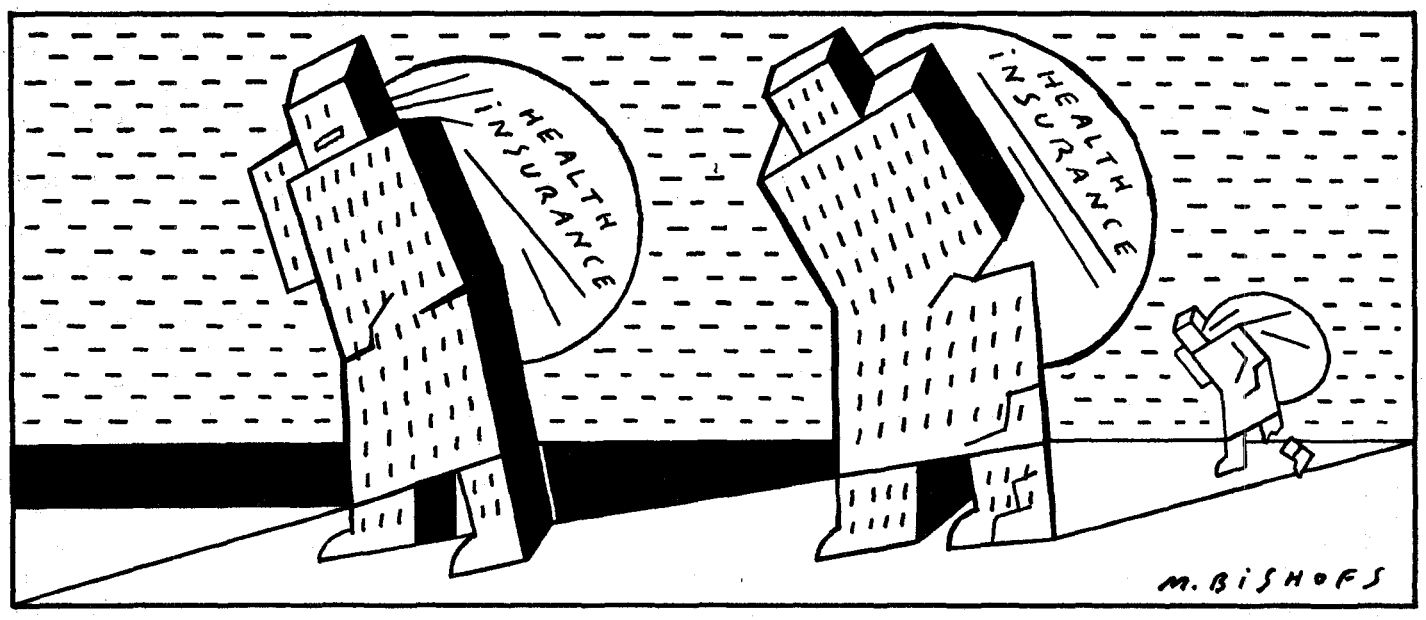
"Progressive" companies are not selflessly offering to pay the costs of national health care in exchange for equal coverage; they simply feel they are already paying their share, and they want to see the costs diminish or disappear. Leading this charge is the auto industry. In the United States, Chrysler pays $700 in health care for every car it produces, more than the cost of steel per car; in its Canadian plants, health care runs at less than $225 per car. General Motors estimates the cost differential between its Canadian and American plants at $2 per hour per worker. "The issue is competitiveness," stresses Chrysler's Iacocca. "Most of our foreign competitors have a $300 to $500 cost advantage over us just in health costs alone for every car and truck they build."

General Motors and Chrysler are also typical of unionized corporations burdened by both escalating current payments and the costs of retiree care. As the unionized sector of the economy shrinks, a small group of industries—automaking, steel, airlines and telecommunications—shoulders more and more of the health care burden. Prevented from abandoning health care by their unions, these companies understand "national health care" as any plan that would tax or penalize employers not currently providing health care. Faced with difficult contract negotiations, health care inflation and the accounting headache of retiree care, union-sector employers have infused recent industrial relations with the idea of socializing health care costs. In the spring of 1989, the National Policy for Steel Committee, a joint panel of the United Steelworkers of America and Bethlehem Steel, urged the "development of a national health policy to . . . control health care costs, and equitably distribute the costs across the country." The Baby Bell and A.T.&T. strikes ended with union concessions on health care and a similar pledge by both sides to lobby for national health care. And Pittston executives ended their strike arm in arm with then-Secretary of Labor Elizabeth Dole, who promised to explore federal assumption of the industry's health care costs.

The business lobby for national health care is inspired by distinct and often contradictory motives. While all companies want to pay less for health care, they have very different ideas as to who should pay more. Unionized firms unable to push the burden onto their workers have turned to the government. Some, looking more narrowly at the looming F.A.S.B. rules, hope to find a solution, as *The Economist* notes, "before health-care obligations land on their balance sheets in 1992." Corporations facing international competition in domestic markets (such as Chrysler or G.M.) see mandated private insurance or public insurance as a form of protective tariff that will force the economy as a whole to counter the competitive advantage of foreign companies. And firms facing only domestic competition simply want to force competitors to bear a comparable share of the costs.

In the last case, while costs may increase for the industry as a whole if public health care is implemented, businesses with existing plans will reap the benefits. Such firms prefer legislation that would mandate employee health care and tax those who don't or can't comply. Modeled on early Social Security law, such legislation would exempt companies with existing health care plans and spread their costs to competitors and (once all firms are paying benefits or punitive taxes) to consumers in the form of higher prices. In all, divisions between large and small business, the divergent motives of different types of industries and competitive differences within industries make corporate unity on the health care issue unlikely in the near future, notwithstanding public relations efforts to the contrary.

Business health care plans have little to do with equity or accessibility. Even the willingness of the Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers to lobby for expanded Medicaid for children in the recent budget negotiations was inspired by little more than a tangible fear that private insurers would shuffle the costs indirectly onto the back of business. Depending on what they are currently paying and what they might be liable for in the future, businesses have proposed little more than spreading health care costs to anyone without the political clout to avoid them. Forc-



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ing more firms to provide health care will do nothing to curb the inflation encouraged by wasteful services, excessive administration and insurers determined to avoid rather than pool risk. Nor has the A.F.L.-C.I.O. shown much interest in containing costs and making health care more accessible to the unemployed or unorganized. Like the A.M.A., it has heartily endorsed the approach of the National Leadership Coalition for Health Care Reform, a business-led group that has decried the current situation but done little more than agree that government solutions should be considered alongside market approaches. At its February convention the A.F.L.-C.I.O. executive council shied away from endorsing national health insurance, proposing instead a "play or pay" system that would simply penalize employers not providing coverage. The resolution may as well have been written by Iacocca.

Virtually alone among business, labor and health industry interests, the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union (O.C.A.W.U.) and Physicians for a National Health Program (P.N.H.P.) have argued for a solution to the health care crisis that does not frame the entire issue as a narrow problem of labor relations or business expenses. The P.N.H.P. position, outlined in *The New England Journal of Medicine* in January 1989, argues for a fully public national health insurance system, modeled on Canada's, that would divorce the delivery of care from private insurance and labor markets. Briefly, O.C.A.W.U. and P.N.H.P. maintain that the American health care system suffers not because the burden of private insurance and private care is borne unevenly or unfairly but simply because it is *private*. Rather than shifting the costs of an inflated and profit-driven system internally and forcing the government to pick up business's health care tab, Canadian-style health insurance would pool risks nationwide, provide care regardless of employment status or "life style" and determine appropriate levels and costs of treatment. According to *Labor Notes*, P.N.H.P.'s David Himmelstein, co-author of the report, argues that "anything short of a Canadian-style system is virtually nothing for labor," which is why groups such as P.N.H.P. and O.C.A.W.U. have tried to prevent various business proposals for federal assistance or federally mandated insurance from dominating the health care debate.

The two organizations have also pursued the health care issue at the state level. Last October O.C.A.W.U. coordinated a series of rallies and job actions around the country in an attempt to gain support for state health insurance. And P.N.H.P.-inspired legislation is currently being debated in Ohio, Washington, Florida, California and Illinois. For business, the prospect of uneven state legislation is yet another annoying twist to the whole problem: Employers in the abovementioned states would prefer national legislation that burdens all competitors.

Unfortunately, the progressive health care alternatives promulgated by O.C.A.W.U. and P.N.H.P. have drawn much less media and political attention than the pastiche of business proposals and anxieties. Almost everyone now agrees that something is terribly wrong with the way health care is provided (or not provided) and paid for in the United States. But if the short-term goals and self-interest of American business carry their usual weight in Washington, health care reform will begin with a large step in the wrong direction. □

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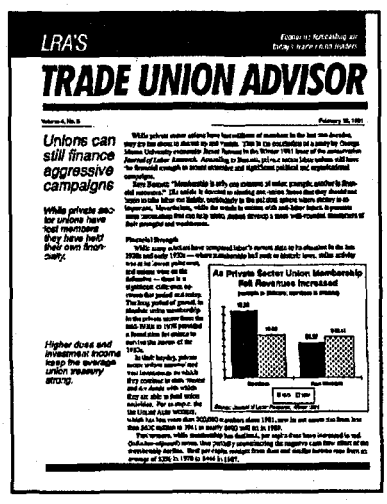
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BOOKS & THE ARTS.

Easter Funny

JOHN CLUTE

THE MIRACLE GAME. *By Josef Skvorecky. Knopf. 436 pp. $22.95.*

It has been said of the Czech language that it was built for play, and that, caught in its quicksilver web of slurs and sideslips, Czech writers find it impossible to sound permanently unamused. Something in the very language—so it has been said—shrugs the shoulders of the storyteller, syncopates the tragedy of the tale, questions the possibility of ever telling the truth. What is truth? asks the protagonist of Josef Skvorecky's *The Miracle Game* again and again, quoting Pontius Pilate, quoting himself, or merely shrugging. Like the question, the answers Danny Smiricky uncovers are profoundly Czech.

Smiricky himself has featured throughout Skvorecky's career, and his life as a Czech caught in the thick of history has been patterned closely upon his creator's own: In *The Swell Season* (first published in Czech in 1975) and in *The Cowards* (Skvorecky's first novel, written before 1950) we can trace Smiricky/Skvorecky from jazz-obsessed adolescence under the Nazis to the harrowing absurdities of military service during the time of the first Communist takeover; and in his much-praised *The Engineer of Human Souls* (1977), we find the imaginary creature and the real man coping with exile in Canada, where Skvorecky has lived since 1968. *The Miracle Game*, first published in Czech in 1972, recasts the years 1948-68 and can be seen as the linchpin (to date) of the sequence. It bears, in other words, a heavy burden.

There can be no doubt that, more than once, it is a burden that has overwhelmed Skvorecky, a writer not known for the formal elegance of his longer projects. *The Miracle Game* is voluminous but rather a shambles; more quicksilver-sly than its translator, Paul Wilson, can perhaps quite adequately convey in English but ponderously arch too. The worldly wisdom embedded in the deeply Czech cadences of its telling cannot, in the end, fully excuse long pages of quite appalling tedium. At its best, it touches the heart with a wry poignance not perhaps attainable by an Anglophone writer; at its worst, it is like *Tristram Shandy* told by the club bore.

The plot itself is a great cat's cradle of coincidences and concealments, showing the influence of the detective fiction Skvorecky has written in tandem with his semi-autobiographical books, and also revealing a failure of architecture. A sense that much of his material is arbitrary more than once assails Smiricky himself, who recounts everything in the first person and who remains very much present on every page: "Oh God, I sighed to myself, the whole world is full of strident symbols." He is right. The surface story simply does not mean enough to carry the burden of "symbolic" significance laid upon it: Neither the life of Smiricky as exemplary intellectual caught in an absurd world nor the history of Czechoslovakia for twenty years comes to life through the unfolding of the story of what may be a miracle (or a hoax) in a small provincial church in the town of Hronov. Smiricky, and Czechoslovakia, come to life in the gaps, whenever the surface tale is absent. Luckily, it often is.

At its best, The Miracle Game *touches the heart with a wry poignance; at its worst, it is like* Tristram Shandy *told by the club bore.*

It is also fortunate that, whenever Skvorecky gets down to telling it, the story is good, melancholy, quirky fun. It is 1948. Young Smiricky is in Hronov to teach social studies to a gaggle of highly sexed teenage girls. Having caught gonorrhea in an earlier encounter, he is at first unable to respond without shooting pains to the unstoppable longing of 17-year-old Vixi to sleep with him. After Gellen, a cynical doctor, cures him, Smiricky and Vixi consummate their lust (and in later years she has a child in secret by him). They are dog-tired but go to the local Catholic church. In the middle of the service, Smiricky is awakened by sounds of awe. Vixi tells him in panic that the statue of Saint Joseph over the altar has supernaturally inclined itself in her direction, presumably to expose her as a fornicator. They flee. The local Communist Party soon claims that the miracle was a fake. The priest is tortured to death. The story ends, for then.

Twenty years later, Smiricky finds himself embroiled in the Prague Spring, and coincidentally—for no one knows he was there—in a colleague's attempt to reexamine the miracle of Hronov. This first coincidence is succeeded by others. A beautiful hard-line Communist whom he has long desired tells him on her deathbed that she was one of three agents of the state who had been instructed in 1948 to contrive a fake miracle for later exposure. From far and wide other clues arrive to muddy the waters. In the final pages of *The Miracle Game*, Smiricky uncovers what may be the final answer, which remains deeply ambiguous all the same. The miracle that begins the book is as imponderable as the Prague Spring that ends it.

Between the first and the second miracle, bulging at the seams like the baggy monster it is, *The Miracle Game* piles in anecdotes and *aperçus*, disquisitions and diatribes, and a couple of meanders into foreign parts, one being contained in a long chapter called "The Final Solution," sixty-odd pages almost entirely detachable from the ostensible main story, from which we would notice no gap. It is, at the same time, the single best part of the book. In "The Final Solution," Skvorecky counterpoints a black-humor tale of expatriate Czechs with an extremely frightening narrative of the arrival of the Russian tanks in August 1968; the laughter and the stunned silence are—as in all the finest Czech literature—finally inextricable.

A large number of figures from the literary establishment also trot through the text, garbed in pseudonyms an expert in Czech publishing would almost certainly find transparent, and even the lay reader may think he recognizes Vaclav Havel himself, and perhaps Josef Nesvadba, the most eminent science fiction writer of the time, though it may be harder to

John Clute's most recent book is Strokes: Essays and Reviews 1966–1986 *(Serconia Press). He writes frequently for the* Times Literary Supplement *of London and* The Washington Post.

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detect the brilliant and threatening presence of Milan Kundera, Czechoslovakia's finest living author, behind any of the shadow names. But whether or not we know the targets, the animus Skvorecky displays in depicting some of these writers and bureaucrats makes it pretty clear that several real-life scores are being settled. The tone of these proceedings is not, perhaps, entirely healthy, and the grosser caricatures have a desiccating effect on whole sections of the book.

This crudeness is diminishing enough when men are the target; about women, Smiricky/Skvorecky is quite astonishing. Breast-fixated and deliriously horny, he tends to describe them in terms of their "knobs" and to treat their minds as inscrutable. This may be no more than an attempt on the part of the author to characterize his imagined alter ego; but for once the antic Czech tongue inhabiting Wilson's fine translation seems merely simpering.

Elsewhere, moments of real triumph dominate, long tragicomic sequences in which souls and tongues twist themselves around the obscene demands of the party line, only to twist back again the following day. In these sections, Smiricky's voice displays a chastened decency that feels genuinely earned; as the book progresses, the spite and the smirking tend to fade, leaving a sense of the complex forgiving humaneness of the survivor who has managed to tell the tale. Though he is always in view, Smiricky is, in fact, remarkably reticent as a protagonist, allowing us very slowly indeed into the humaneness of his mature self. Only slowly does he allow us to understand the sole useful meaning of the miracle of 1948—too late, perhaps, to save *The Miracle Game* as a novel. The miracle is the people who lived it: Smiricky himself; Vixi, who becomes a loved and fully lovable human being in the final pages of the text; the priest and even those who torture him; the cynics and the dupes and the baffled apparatchiks. The "truth" that has confounded them all may have been no more than a prank, a secular gesture offensive to the church, a humanist irony anathema to the state. Or perhaps not. Perhaps, as Skvorecky seems to suggest, there is no end to the miracle game. □

The Stalin Question

MARK VON HAGEN

STALIN: The Glasnost Revelations. *By Walter Laqueur. Charles Scribner's Sons. 382 pp. $24.95.*

STALIN IN POWER: The Revolution From Above, 1928-1941. *By Robert C. Tucker. Norton. 707 pp. $29.95.*

IS STALINISM REALLY DEAD? *By Alexander S. Tsipko. HarperCollins. 278 pp. $24.95.*

As the Soviet people and their leaders painfully reform their lives, their discussion of current problems and visions of alternative futures rely heavily on interpretations of the Russian Imperial and Soviet past. In the first five years of *perestroika*, the "Stalin question" dominated the dialogue, but deep political divisions in the nation, as well as among the intelligentsia, have blocked the emergence of any consensus about the nature, origins or consequences of Stalinism. Walter Laqueur, a veteran observer of the Soviet Union, notes in his informative survey, *Stalin: The Glasnost Revelations*, that the debate over de-Stalinization contrasts vividly with the *Historikerstreit* (historians' dispute) over the meaning of the Nazi experience [see Norman Birnbaum, "History and the Holocaust—I," May 22, 1989]. In Germany and Italy, military defeat forced a radical break with the past, but the Soviet Union's moral cleansing is proving more protracted and subject to frequent reversals. In response to the campaign of de-Stalinization, neo-Stalinists and the Russian right have mounted an intellectual counterattack, which Laqueur accurately characterizes as anti-anti-Stalinism. Powerful institutional interests—most prominently in the security apparatus, the military, economic bureaucracies and Communist Party apparatus—maintain an important stake in the orthodox interpretation of the past and thus prolong the Stalin debate.

Laqueur focuses on several topics that reveal those institutional interests. The security apparatus, the K.G.B. and N.K.V.D., continue to withhold historical information from investigators and thereby prevent a comprehensive re-evaluation of the terror and the principles that guided it. Also important is the persistent hostility to reform of important parts of the military establishment, including the hundreds of thousands of veterans of World War II. Because Soviet victory in the war so bolstered the nerve and reputation of the Stalin regime, the most sensitive topics in military history today are the wartime performance of the army, the level of Soviet preparedness and the cost of victory. Shocking revelations of incompetence, coupled with new evidence revealing that the Soviet side had considerable advantage over the Germans in armaments and troop numbers, have contributed to a painful reconsideration of the Soviet victory. The attack on the economic bureaucracy, or the "command-administrative system," as it has come to be known, is waged by means of critical re-evaluation of the planned economy, but especially of the first Five-Year Plan and the collectivization campaign. And finally, the party establishment, which attempted to salvage its reputation by distinguishing the Stalin period from a more legitimate Leninist legacy, is facing powerful challenges from outside its ranks that call for de-Leninization.

All the while, the professional historical establishment is undergoing its own fierce battles; the Academy of Sciences apparatus, itself a Stalinist creation, faces reorganization and reform, if not outright dissolution. Significantly, the first uncensored discussions of burning historical topics coincide with the revival of Soviet historical study itself [see Dev Murarka, "Recovering the Buried Stalin Years," October 24 and October 31, 1987]. Because the Academy institutes have been attacked as tools of the regime's propaganda apparatus, it is not professional historians who have set the terms of debate but rather creative writers and essayists, that important category of Soviet political journalists who write from a strong sense of civic spirit and social criticism. Indeed, for professional Soviet historians who are trying to rethink their past based on newly released archival documents, the present political mood is far from propitious. Reflective historians compete with more "radical" interpreters who often treat evidence opportunistically in support of tendentious social commentary. This too distinguishes the Soviet debate from its German counterpart. Whereas the German discussions are informed by sophisticated archival research by both German and non-German historians, the Soviet debate continues to be waged in terms of stereotypes and national myths. As a result, the discussions

Mark von Hagen teaches Russian history at Columbia University.

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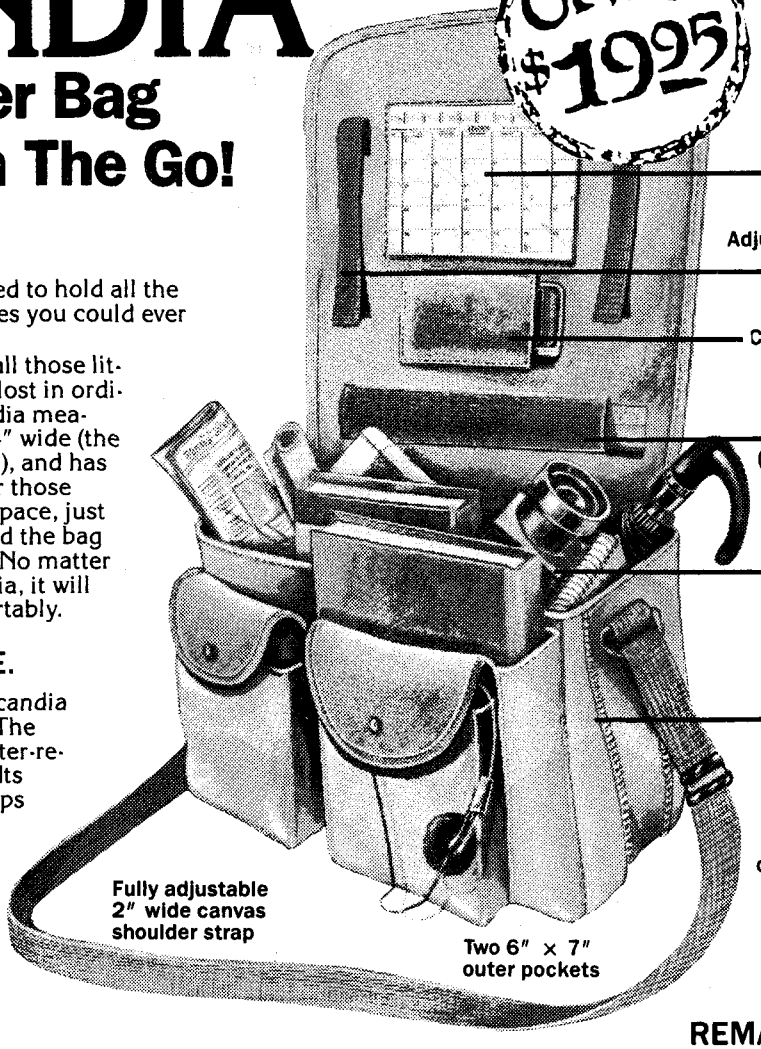
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have only barely begun to move beyond the political and moral stages.

Much of the above is implied in Laqueur's book but never explicitly stated; consequently, he leaves the reader confused about the contexts that shape the historical debates. Laqueur acknowledges that despite the frequently heated polemics about Stalin and his cohort, nothing sensational has emerged, largely because most of what is being revealed was already known in one form or another outside the Soviet Union (and also because some of the most potentially revealing archival repositories remain closed or no longer exist). He helpfully compares the recent revelations to the first wave of de-Stalinization under Khrushchev in the late 1950s and early 1960s and to the debates outside the Soviet Union at least since the 1930s.

But while Laqueur identifies the institutional and political obstacles to a more fundamental rethinking of the Soviet past, he ignores the influence of the prevailing moral and intellectual climate. A new anti-establishment version of the Soviet past vindicates the émigré-dissident perspective whose most influential spokesperson has been Alexander Solzhenitsyn. The gulag, or labor camp network, has become the defining symbol of the Soviet era, and Soviet society has been effectively divided into prison officials and prisoners. Paradoxically, however, the gulag perspective is a virtual mirror image of orthodox Soviet historical tenets, depicting a monolithic, conflict-free party-state ruthlessly and consistently pursuing its policies from 1917 to the present. Only now the regime is condemned instead of celebrated and its victims are memorialized.

The Soviet censors who for so long prevented discussion of the regime's brutalities have unwittingly authenticated any new claims about the past, vesting the most contradictory accounts with an unassailable moral sanctity. Most of the victims whose testimony constitutes the gulag perspective were "political" prisoners, members of the political and intellectual elite who were jailed for overt anti-regime or anti-Stalin crimes. (In fact the overwhelming majority of the camp inmates were "non-politicals," largely peasants and workers who were sentenced for violation of socialist property or disciplinary infractions.) The bias in favor of the politicals has focused discussion on the Moscow show trials and the intrigues and potential oppositions at the top of the political and social hierarchies. None of this provides evidence of Stalin's motives or psychological drives, but that has not discouraged historians and other commentators from speculating (often wildly) about them.

Robert Tucker, professor of politics emeritus at Princeton University, offers a provocative thesis to explain Stalin's rise to power and his criminal exercise of it. Together with Stephen Cohen's biography of Nikolai Bukharin, Tucker's biography (*Stalin in Power* is the second of three projected volumes) is helping shape the Soviet debate. Last year Tucker's first volume, *Stalin as Revolutionary* (published in the United States in 1973), appeared in a Russian translation to great acclaim. Tucker identifies three sources of Stalinism: the political culture of czarist Russia, the revolutionary culture of Leninist Bolshevism and the mind and personality of Joseph Stalin himself. By defining Stalinism as a statist and Russian nationalist "Bolshevism of the radical right," Tucker comes down squarely on the side of Stalin's personality and the elements of continuity with Russian autocratic politics as against the revolutionary tradition. Tucker devotes considerable attention to Stalin's relations to Lenin

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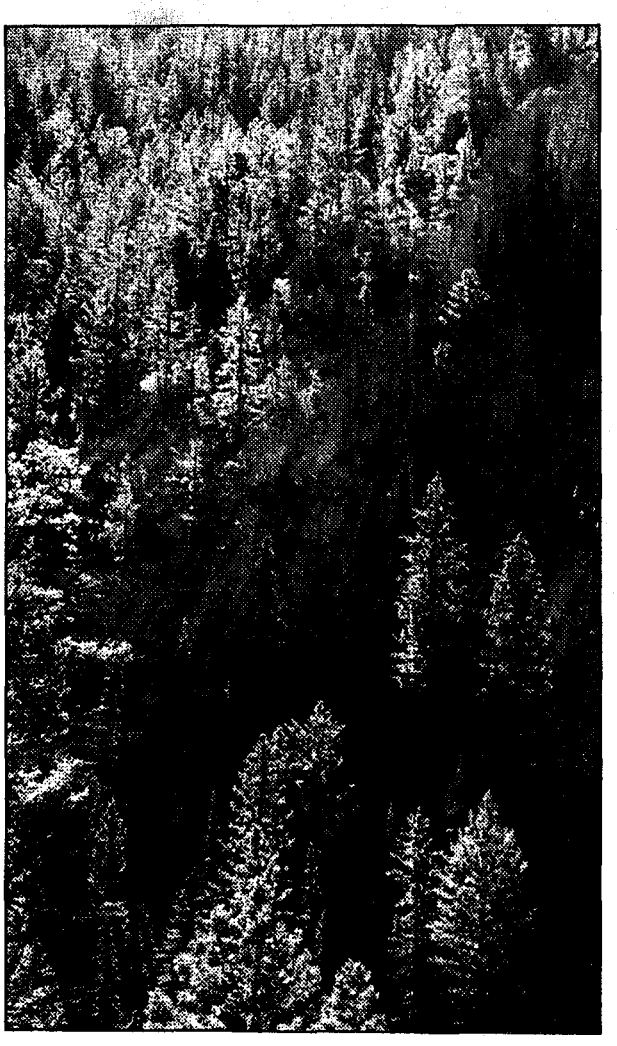
and Leninism. Although he acknowledges that Stalin could legitimately identify himself and his program with the Lenin of the civil war period, from 1918 to 1920, that particular Leninism was also a tragic product of Russian statist traditions. For Tucker an equally legitimate and far more attractive revolutionary culture is the Leninism of Bukharin and the moderate evolutionary politics of the New Economic Policy during the 1920s. Stalin's innovation was coercive change from above, as first demonstrated by the disastrous collectivization of agriculture; Tucker emphasizes that this was not the Leninism of either the Left Opposition or the rightist Bukharin moderates.

Tucker gives considerable weight to Stalin's political ambitions, his vanity and his exaggerated Georgian sense of vengeance, but focusing on Stalin's personality fails to answer the question of how he rose to power and, more important, why his influence persisted for so many years. When Tucker comes to the question of how it was that Stalin was able to resurrect the political culture of Ivan the Terrible, including a new enserfment of the peasantry, the binding of all social classes to the state and the dreaded *oprichnina*, or political police, he resorts to a very confusing explanatory device: Stalin—whose fascination with the Russian past was revealed in Tucker's first volume—drew from accounts of the reigns of Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great a statist plan for remaking a backward society in a hostile international environment. Thus through Stalin's personality certain features of the Russian statist tradition magically re-emerged in the 1930s. How these ideas or practices were transferred across the centuries, by what social or institutional mechanisms, is left unanswered by Tucker's Stalin-centered narrative. The result is essentially an explanation for Stalinism by historical analogy.

In contrast to Tucker's thesis of fundamental continuity from autocratic Russia to Stalinism, the current anti-establishment perspective among Soviet intellectuals posits a radical discontinuity between a fundamentally healthy late-czarist society and the unfortunate experiment that followed the 1917 revolutions. The trend in today's Soviet Union is increasingly toward historical nihilism: a call to repudiate the past seventy-five years as a failed experiment at best, a period of monstrous crimes at worst. Against this generally bleak intellectual background, Alexander Tsipko appears at first to be a refreshing exception. Tsipko, who is featured on the dust jacket as a "major Soviet philosopher," is not a professional historian; consequently, his speculations about the origins of Stalinism, which he defines as ultraleftist radical utopianism, are metahistorical or philosophical. He thus shifts the center of the argument from Stalin's personality and Russian autocratic traditions to the Bolshevik political culture that took shape during the civil war and the 1920s. Because *Is Stalinism Really Dead?* is a series of essays, or *publitsistika*, and not a scholarly history, the result is provocative and suggestive, but also illogical and eclectic.

Tsipko's strength lies in identifying certain myths that became Stalinist political culture. And he quickly takes issue with those, like the Mensheviks and some Trotskyists, who view Stalinism as the natural result of Russian sociocultural backwardness. Tsipko correctly argues that the peasants were not to blame for the tragedy of collectivization, and that the cult of Stalin spread not from the countryside to the city but in the opposite direction. It is rather to the ultraleftist political culture of the urban popula-

Dispatches from the Deep Woods



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tions, especially some of the working class and the intelligentsia, that the historian should look for the source of Stalinism.

Tsipko attacks Marxism and utopian Enlightenment thought in general for refusing to accept human nature as it is and seeking instead to reshape it in monstrous experiments. Not only Marx and Engels but also Hegel and Rousseau via Robespierre take a beating. Tsipko asserts in several places that Marxism leads inexorably, if not inevitably, to Stalinism; however, he has an unfortunate tendency to reduce arguments to caricatures. Not only does he see little or no significant difference between Stalin and Trotsky but he finds no fundamental disagreements between Stalin and Karl Kautsky. But Tsipko is probably right when he asserts that by the end of the 1920s more members of the party shared Stalin's utopian version of Marxism than they did the moderate vision of Lenin's final writings.

Tsipko's analysis of Russian and world history is characteristic of many writers and thinkers in the Soviet Union today who are moving toward what might be called national or patriotic liberalism. Their critiques of Bolshevism typically evolve from revisionist Marxism to an infatuation with the anti-Marxist writings of Russian turn-of-the-century religious conservatives such as Nikolai Berdyaev; most of them suffer from both an overuse of ahistorical abstractions and an understandable eclecticism as they seek new ways to understand their national past. Tsipko's political agenda includes a revival of Christianity, Russian national patriotism, law and order, and the market. In identifying the Russian ultraleft—by which he most often means the Left Opposition that coalesced around Trotsky—as the major culprit in destroying native Russian initiative and Christian morality, Tsipko's arguments come very close to those of the extreme Russian nationalists who now control several journals, in which they air their virulent ideas about the responsibility of Jews and other non-Russians for the Soviet holocaust. For example, Tsipko refers to Trotsky as Bronstein (Lenin is never referred to as Ulyanov or Stalin as Dzhugashvili), a popular literary device of the chauvinist journals *Nash sovremennik* and *Molodaia gvardiia*. The only vaguely good Bolsheviks for Tsipko are the Russians Lenin and Bukharin. Elsewhere Tsipko, echoing the worst epithets of Stalinist nationalism, equates cosmopolitanism with disease. Although Tsipko criticizes most of his contemporaries for not being historians and preferring sociophilosophical categories to facts, he readily indulges in the same sorts of categories, except that he understands them as an eternal, ahistorical human nature.

For Tsipko, Russian peasants were the exemplars of a genuine human nature that respects tradition and religion and—especially important for Tsipko's world view—they favored capitalism and private trade. The "typical" peasants are industrious, moral and anticommunal, while the potential supporters of Bolshevism are lazy, shiftless failures and bunglers. In support of his most important assertions, Tsipko cites other contemporary essayists and fictional portrayals of the past. Unfortunately for Tsipko, however, the historical evidence of the typical peasant's love for capitalism is sparse, if we take only the reaction of the Russian peasantry after the 1917 revolutions. The peasant households that had broken from the commune under the terms of the Stolypin reform were forcibly reintegrated into the commune, not by the Bolsheviks but by the communal peasants themselves.

Moreover, Tsipko, like so many other Soviet writers today, has adopted wholesale a version of American triumphalism, whose converse side is Soviet or socialist defeat. He views the market as natural and socialist or nonmarket countries as artificial, and he seems unaware of the history of capitalist relations. Markets neither came into existence spontaneously, as the liberal myth would have it, nor are they sustained without the considerable force of state coercive and ideological apparatuses; nor have they proved capable of resolving major social and political dilemmas in all historical periods. Furthermore, markets are not neutral in their social and economic consequences but tend to reflect the existing stratifications of political power.

Tsipko's central thesis—that the roots of the Soviet Union's problems lie in the Marxist ideology that took hold in the former Russian empire after 1917—is not supported by his own arguments. He hints several times that the specific revolutionary environment in which the new ideas were to take root was one marked not only by high idealism and yearning for justice but also by hostility, radical nihilism, class hatred, intolerance and a predilection for violence. Most often, Tsipko seems to refer to the fratricidal civil war, but he occasionally refers to World War I—which accustomed much

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of the world to violence. Elsewhere he suggests that the rapid pace of state industrialization and primitive urbanization resulted in a breakdown in traditional values and life styles and a consequent moral vacuum, which provided fertile soil for the emergence of Stalinism. Here he seems to suggest that Russian revolutionary thought is not so much a matter of Marxist influences but that Russian revolutionaries took selectively from Marx those ideas that corresponded to their attempts to explain and overcome their situation.

Indeed, one of the most challenging tasks of the historian is to investigate how ideas become social attitudes and material forces and how they evolve as they confront other material forces; perhaps Tsipko's as yet primitive gropings will open the way for talented professional historians to face these issues. In the meantime, we are far from resolving the riddles of the Stalin period, especially the reasons for the current broad popular support for Stalin and Stalinism. We must for the time being content ourselves with learning largely negative truths, that is, discovering what is not true about what we have assumed in the past. If anything, we are at the very beginning of a comprehensive reinvestigation of the Soviet past and its relationship to the legacy of imperial Russia. □

Keep on Truckin'

JONATHAN TASINI

RANK-AND-FILE REBELLION: Teamsters for a Democratic Union. *By Dan La Botz. Routledge. 336 pp. $60. Paper $18.95.*

In 1976, rank-and-file members of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (I.B.T.) sued to gain the right to vote on their contract but were rebuffed by a federal judge. One plaintiff, Ken Paff, a member of Teamsters for a Decent Contract, wrote in the caucus's newspaper, *Convoy*, "The most important point is this: You can't win rank-and-file power by relying on the courts, federal judges, politicians or union officials."

Ironically, fifteen years later, it is precisely the courts, judges and politicians that are handing Paff, now a national organizer and driving force behind Teamsters for a Democratic Union (T.D.U.), a chance to see if rank-and-file power will transform the 1.6 million-member union. In March 1989, the federal government signed a consent decree with the I.B.T.'s leadership, settling a massive racketeering suit that alleged the union's top leadership was dominated by organized crime. As part of the deal, the union agreed to a government-supervised election with, for the first time, a direct, secret-ballot vote by the rank and file.

In *Rank-and-File Rebellion: Teamsters for a Democratic Union*, Dan La Botz traces the rise of T.D.U. from the first murmuring of dissent in the early 1970s. La Botz is not a disinterested observer; he is a founding member of the group. As a result, the book suffers from a frequently irritating tone of outrage and sanctimony, not to mention occasional editorial lapses and sloppiness. Still, it is rich with information.

As La Botz correctly points out, the lack of union democracy is not a problem confined to the teamsters, but trying to organize a dissident movement in the I.B.T. was especially difficult. How do you meld a group of people whose job requires them to lead a nomadic existence? What rallying cry unites workers living thousands of miles apart, galvanizing them to oppose their leadership? Indeed, it wasn't until 1971 that eighty teamsters from sixteen states were angry enough to gather in one place—Toledo, Ohio—to form Teamsters United Rank and File (TURF), the union's first national rank-and-file movement.

They were infuriated that I.B.T. acting president Frank Fitzsimmons, who had replaced the jailed Jimmy Hoffa, had botched the National Master Freight Agreement negotiations and then tried to undermine wildcat strikes that broke out when the contract deadline passed. His strong-arm tactics to suppress the strikes were a hallmark of the I.B.T. leadership's reaction to dissent, as was his redbaiting. Fitzsimmons blamed Communists for the wildcat strikes, though according to the author, "it was clear that the strike was a spontaneous rebellion supported by tens of thousands of Teamsters and a number of local officials."

La Botz's uneven narrative is rescued by judicious use of short profiles of rank-and-file teamsters, who give stark and often poignant descriptions of their lives, the pulse of work and the union. More important, a general audience needs to hear the voices of workers. As I recently found in a study for Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting on how the media cover labor, most stories on the teamsters deal with the mob and shady characters (for instance, in 1989, thirty-one of the thirty-seven articles on the I.B.T. in *The New York Times* highlighted organized crime and corruption). La Botz reminds the reader that the vast majority of teamsters are honest, decent, hardworking people fighting to keep a grip on their declining standard of living.

Doug Allan, for example, probably reflects tens of thousands of teamsters who admired Hoffa, who, in life and death, became a prominent figure in American folklore. Speaking about his perception of Hoffa, the 63-year-old freight driver mused, " 'Ah, so what if he stole five bucks from me, he got me fifteen, so am I going to complain?' Many other people, I think, felt the same way. We saw him doing something wrong, and we didn't say nothing about it, 'cause we thought we were being treated right."

But then Allan began having his doubts: "Jimmy Hoffa changed the IBT constitution, giving himself almost complete authority to run the union. And I believe a lot of the people that were more active than I was at that time, must have said, 'Well, so what if he runs it, he's doing a great job, why shouldn't he run it?' And that's where I and the rest of the people made the mistake. We—I have to include myself—we allowed them to change the constitution and give the International president the power he has today."

Ultimately, that would come back to hurt rank-and-file members. When times were good, nobody cared; union democracy was a high-minded concept for middle-class liberals and academics. But union control became very important when the I.B.T. leadership gave concessions to trucking companies who then created nonunion subsidiaries (a practice known as "double-breasting"); when the I.B.T. sat back and allowed casual hires to begin replacing full-time workers by the droves; and when the I.B.T. signed off on the introduction of "two-tier" wage structures.

From its early days, the I.B.T.'s national leaders saw their hold on the bureaucracy as a means to personal enrichment. In 1937 future president Dave Beck,

Jonathan Tasini, a labor journalist, is president of the National Writers Union.

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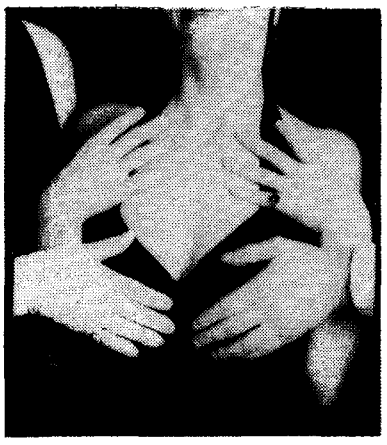

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locked in a power struggle with socialist Farrell Dobbs, declared, "There is no place in our union for Communists or Bolsheviks. I am for the capitalistic system!" Beck's greed was far more powerful than his ideology; as I.B.T. president, he amassed assets and businesses. "What the hell?" he said, speaking of his elected position. "If I believed in free enterprise, isn't it natural that I should try to use it for my own financial advantage?"

When Beck went to jail in 1957 for tax evasion, Hoffa rose to the presidency. He was immensely popular, especially among freight drivers, who saw Hoffa as one of them, a pugnacious leader who would use his power to stand up for the little guy against the boss. As La Botz correctly observes, Hoffa, like Beck and every other I.B.T. president since, including the late Jackie Presser, embraced business unionism. Jackie Presser, in fact, joined the labor movement in 1966 only after his sports club and restaurant—financed by a $1.1 million loan from the Teamsters' Central States Pension Fund—failed. The bosses accepted "absolutely the right of the employers to run their companies," writes La Botz, "of businessmen in general to dominate the economy, of the corporate elite to control politics."

But here La Botz drops the ball. If the I.B.T. is guilty of not challenging capitalism, it is in good company with the entire labor movement. With very few exceptions, the post–World War II national labor leaders, who rose to power partly because they were ardent anti-Communists, acquiesced in the employer's right to do as he or she pleased.

La Botz's generally myopic view of the T.D.U. story lets this crucial point slip by. Business unionism has cost thousands of teamsters and other workers not only jobs and decent wages but their health and their lives. A labor movement steeped in an ethic that, for instance, fought for a worker's right to stop an assembly line when a hazardous condition arose on the shop floor would have saved countless limbs and souls. Instead, truckers and others now face conditions not seen since the sweatshops of the 1920s and 1930s.

La Botz partly sidesteps a key question: Why has T.D.U. attracted only 10,000 members out of a 1.6 million–member union in fifteen years? When the average member or honest local leader sees dissidents losing their jobs, set upon by thugs who break their limbs or kill them, he or she is likely to think twice about speaking out. La Botz also mentions opportunists who used T.D.U. as a personal vehicle to gain attention or land union staff jobs as a payoff.

But La Botz does not consider whether T.D.U. could have grown much more quickly had it concentrated on developing a mass leadership rather than relying on a few charismatic individuals, particularly Paff. In the minds of many teamsters, T.D.U. is still stigmatized as a marginal group. In fact, when T.D.U. endorsed Ron Carey, the non-T.D.U. reform presidential candidate in the government-supervised election, some of Carey's supporters harbored grave reservations about whether the link with T.D.U. could be the kiss of death for their candidate.

Whatever its weaknesses, however, T.D.U. has had an extraordinary impact on the recent history of the union. Without T.D.U.'s successful campaign against the two-thirds rule (which required that more than 66 percent of the membership vote against a contract for it to be rejected), majority rule would not be in place. And T.D.U.'s input was crucial in determining how the government structured the final consent decree. Moreover, without T.D.U.'s grass-roots operation, Carey would never have been able to mount the campaign that has made him a serious contender for the throne.

Now comes the test. T.D.U. has fought for rank-and-file election of national leaders since its inception, claiming that the absence of union democracy left the union in the hands of corrupt officials. T.D.U. must now prove that in the new environment it can recruit new members by projecting a vision of a democratic, member-driven union that could change the direction of the labor movement. □

FILMS.

STUART KLAWANS

The Doors

On the forty-first day of war, I went to a big theater to see *The Doors*. It made sense; the last time I'd thought about Jim Morrison, America was shooting up another part of the world. With those Vietnam-era memories ricocheting through the movie house like part of the wrap-around soundtrack, with present-day gunfire echoing in the background, I sat down to contemplate Oliver Stone's recreation of the ultimate rock-and-roll death trip.

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It is the story of a lonely, inward, softly handsome young man with a head full of poetry, who managed in just six years to turn himself into a famous corpse. Inevitably, the film concludes at the gravesite in Paris, with its encrustations of graffiti and kitsch portrait bust. Such is Jim Morrison's end; his beginning, in terms of Stone's narrative, is a car wreck.

Glimpsed in the New Mexico desert by a freckle-faced, prepubescent Jim, this roadside disaster seems to condense all the elements that will come to obsess him: random violence, policemen, the wilderness, "primitive" wisdom (embodied in the figure of a Native American shaman, who sits among the wreck's victims). What's missing from this primal scene, of course, is sex. Jim's parents are present, but they're both fully dressed, sitting in the front seat of the family car. If Jim, tucked into the back, gazes through the window as if he already belongs outside with the Indians, it's not because he needs to escape the erotic tug of his parents. They haven't any.

Whatever rages this boy will act out in his later career as a pop music Dionysus—even screaming his way through a stripped-down Oedipal fantasy in "The End"—death will figure more prominently in his dramas than any form of love. As Stone tells the story, Jim becomes a sex god who suffers from chronic erection failure. He's a teen idol who complains that little girls "want my dick, not my words," a lover who batters one of the women in his life (assaulting her with the question "Will you die for me?") and participates with another in a wrist-slashing ceremony. A will-toward-death of such urgency goes beyond even the misguided heroics Stone addressed in *Born on the Fourth of July*. In that picture, the protagonist at least had a flesh-and-blood mother to scream at when his penis no longer worked. In *The Doors*, Mother and Father have disappeared (though the roadside shaman sticks around to haunt the rest of the film). The next time we see Jim, after the car-wreck scene, he looks as if he'd sprung full-grown from the desert as he stands on the highway, thumbing his way toward Los Angeles.

So this isn't *Jolson Sings Again*. Stone pays passing tribute to the formulas of the show-biz biopic—at their first rehearsal, Jim and the band put together "Light My Fire" as quickly as if they were Bert Kalmar and Harry Ruby in *Three Little Words*—and the soundtrack is thick with greatest hits; but *The Doors* will hardly satisfy those millions of fans

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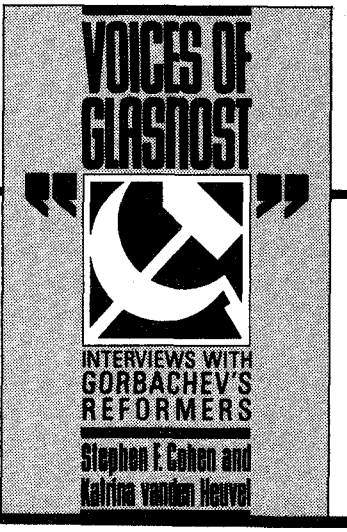

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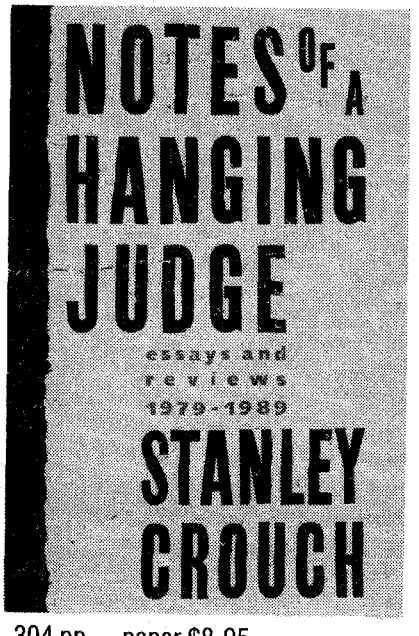

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who just wanted to party. It's aimed instead at millions of other fans, who thought of Jim Morrison's lyrics as vatic utterances, his thrashings as sacred rites. Stone apparently was among those believers; as a filmmaker who has tried, like Jim Morrison, to bring his notion of art into the supermarket of entertainment, he has all the more reason to identify with his subject. The film takes Jim Morrison as seriously as he took himself. Whether you like the result will depend, I suspect, on your own degree of faith—or perhaps your willingness to think about self-immolation as the highest form of late-sixties culture.

"Think about" might seem a strange choice of words for so Dionysian a theme; but for all its expressionistic gestures, *The Doors* turns out to be a remarkably logical film—almost cold in its detachment. Not only does it give you sexual frenzy without the sex, Oedipal fury without the parents—it focuses on a charismatic leader and his relationship with the crowd, then denies you any immediate sense of being part of the audience. With one crucial exception—the riotous concert in Miami that ended Morrison's public appearances—the innumerable point-of-view shots give you either the performer's vantage point or God's. You're never plunged into the throng, into the experience of the music. Instead, Stone treats each concert or recording session—each extended musical sequence—as a framework for flashbacks and hallucinations. The narrative proceeds episodically, with the lyrics serving to illustrate Morrison's life or providing occasions for visionary excursions; but the film's structure can't really be called musical, since the music itself doesn't seem to interest Stone. He loves the idea of The Doors, not their sound, their sensuousness.

You might say that *The Doors* is structured as a hallucinatory ritual journey—which makes this picture Oliver Stone's version of *Apocalypse Now.* Francis Ford Coppola, who spent the sixties in stateside hippieland, imagined his way into an archetypal jungle war (using The Doors' music, too); Stone, the Vietnam veteran, constructs an equally archetypal home front, where the war rages under a different name. "Break on through to the other side" is Jim's creed; at first, he thinks he'll smash through the doors of perception into William Blake's promised Eden. Only later does he realize that the other side feels very much like the empty air, waiting just beyond all those building ledges he likes to walk along. The other side is the blankness of death—while on *this* side are all those mundane responsibilities men blow off when they go to war. When the more brainy and assertive of Jim's lovers, having become pregnant, reminds him of the absolute vows he'd sworn to her, he's ready with the soldier's traditional excuse, the one you hear after the village burns down: He hadn't meant to cause any harm. He'd just thought he was having a little fun.

The women who figure in *The Doors*—the witchy, dark one, Patricia Kennealy (Kathleen Quinlan) and the dumb-bunny blonde, Pamela Courson (Meg Ryan)—will not call forth any feminist rejoicing. The way they're portrayed is not admirable; but I think the characters are plausible enough, given my memories of the period and a slight acquaintance with rock and roll. Quinlan, of course, has the better role, and she runs with it. She's sharp-featured, a little wrinkled around the eyes, with a wised-up look and a quick, drop-dead way of speaking, which is well suited to one of the film's very few articulate characters. As for Ryan, she has the unwelcome task of portraying a butterscotch sundae of a woman, and to my mind has done all too good a job. She's left no mark on the character, no hint of who Pamela Courson might have been on her own, so we see her only as Jim might have—alternately a vision of purity and a punching bag.

As Jim, Val Kilmer delivers a rare kind of performance. He looks and sounds very much like Morrison, and yet he doesn't seem to be doing an impersonation. You get none of the nasty glee of Faye Dunaway's portrayal of Joan Crawford in *Mommie Dearest* or Ron Silver's Alan Dershowitz in *Reversal of Fortune.* Like Stone, Kilmer is too serious about the business at hand to engage in that sort of vulgar fun. But even though he sinks into the character, refusing to show off for the camera, Kilmer contributes to the film's air of detachment. His Jim has only two modes of addressing the world—mumbling to himself and screaming—neither of which allows you a way into the man. So, despite all the point-of-view shots, you watch him from a slight distance as he turns from poet to Lizard King to shambling, chubby drunk, all the while remaining wrapped up in himself. Even at the end, when he says goodbye to the other Doors, his farewell present is a bound volume of his poetry; his gift to one of their children is a doll with his own features.

I confess I would have liked *The Doors* better if it had conveyed less of this sense of self-absorption. A more relaxed film, with more of a sense of play, might have brought across those qualities that got people hooked on Jim Morrison, qualities that *The Doors* pretty much takes on faith. There are scenes that might have been wonderfully funny—such as Jim's encounter with Andy War-

THE GARDEN

A place like a painting. Think of
the garden of Monet. No problems
than those the brush can handle.
Let's live here: profuse dahlias
and me in white dress with blue sash.
Our sons, animated by the trick of light,
concern themselves with hoops
and little wooden horses. The incandescence
burns features away and loss
is unpredictable.

In the pleasure of reds and greens
we wait. Your summer straw and linen
are swirls and dabs. Your face
has no layering of memory.
We live here, the garden table is set
for tea. These are our figures
dazzled in such light as though
afternoon were our favorite time
and we had not yet been cruel
to one another.

Isabel Nathaniel

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hol—had anybody chosen to see them that way. Other scenes, especially those of domestic chaos, are almost as dreadful to sit through as they must have been to live. At its most bombastic and portentous, *The Doors* seems like a full-length, big-budget version of the film Jim makes early on as a student at U.C.L.A.—which might be a way of staying true to the character but is awfully hard on the audience. At those moments, I looked back longingly to my favorite scene in Oliver Stone's films, the confession in *Salvador*, in which the camera simply stays put on James Woods, allowing him to deliver five minutes of sheer joy.

But that was *Salvador*—a film about a particular man and place and time—and this is *The Doors*, which keeps turning into an invocation of the gods. Of course it's going to be bombastic. An archetype is merely a cliché, as seen by somebody who lacks a sense of humor. Just so, the shamans and symbols in *The Doors* crowd out any opportunity for laughter. In so doing, they also obscure part of the truth about the late sixties: It was a time of self-immolation but also of great, ludicrous fooling around. Yes, some of the fun ended in death; but then, some of it was just fun.

In fairness to Stone, though, and to this oversized, audacious, multilayered, unquestionably heartfelt film, I have to turn around the little definition I gave above. What is a sense of humor? It's merely a tactic by which some people gain a temporary sense of mastery over forces they can't control or understand. The late sixties became a death trip in direct proportion to people's desperation, as they realized the slaughter everywhere was senseless and would continue anyway. Laugh, or sneer, and that sounds like a cliché. Let yourself weep, and it opens the way toward the most terrible of archetypes. I saw *The Doors* after weeks of war, when George Bush could have claimed success in all his stated goals without any further loss of life but decided instead that more people should die. I could not laugh.

Short Takes: Moviegoers with strong nerves might like to drop by Film Forum in New York, which is showing *Blood in the Face*, a documentary by Anne Bohlen, Kevin Rafferty and James Ridgeway. The film's subjects are members of various racist hate groups—Aryan Nations, the Klan, the American Nazi Party, Christian Identity; they have gathered at a corrugated shed in Michigan to make speeches at each other and enjoy a little fellowship and cross-burning. The filmmakers editorialize as little as possible, letting these people speak for themselves. Forget *The Silence of the Lambs*—this is the scariest movie around.

There are two other films in the theaters now that touch on dark subjects, yet these allow themselves the distance of humor. One of them—a considerable surprise—is Paul Mazursky's *Scenes From a Mall*. Starring Bette Midler and Woody Allen (how's that for inspired casting?), the picture concerns a marital breakup, which takes place at Christmastime in a Beverly Hills shopping center. There, amid all the false cheer and endless marketing of romantic love, the characters descend to the nastiest level of male-female animosity. It's sharply observed and very funny, with a happy ending that's calculated to seem as phony as the Christmas carolers.

Baxter, by Jerome Boivin, is enjoying a run in Los Angeles at the Nuart; those of you who are in the vicinity might tear yourselves away from the mall and see it. The narrator is a dog—a bull terrier—who wants to live with and understand humans and have them give him orders. In other words, this is a fable about the impulse toward fascism, and a mordant one at that. Try it. □

BOOK NOTE.

KIRKPATRICK SALE

THE 1990/91 DIRECTORY OF INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES: A Guide to Cooperative Living. *Fellowship for Intentional Community and the Communities Publications Cooperative. 310 pp. $12.*

It will probably come as a surprise to many who see no farther than the silver pane of their TV screen, but the phenomenon of intentional communities that got so much attention a few years ago—the so-called commune movement—is alive and well. We have here a book that attests not only to its vitality and durability but, more, to its sagacity and dynamism, even to its new level of commitment and coherence.

True, the number of intentional communities has certainly fallen since the early 1970s, when some of the more reasonable estimates put the number that

Kirkpatrick Sale's latest book is The Conquest of Paradise *(Knopf).*

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THE POCKETWATCH

This is the grave of a man
who every day of his life
wore a starched white shirt;
who taught me how
to play solitaire,
and then double solitaire,
in a white room
where the radiator knocked
and a jade plant
grew in a flowerpot
full of bleached stones;
who drank his rye neat
and lit his ten-cent cigars
with the wooden matches
he kept in the saddlebags
of a ceramic elephant;
who carried a small penknife
with a mother-of-pearl
handle on his key chain
to clip those cigars;
who worked at an oyster bar,
shucking shellfish over
a barrel in a rubber apron;
who shaved at six a.m. sharp
and salted his food heavily
and didn't eat meat on Friday
yet seldom went to church;
who brought walnuts to
the squirrels in Fort Tryon Park
and preferred Westerns
when he attended matinees
at the RKO Coliseum;
who stuck a carnation
in his lapel on Sundays
and only danced at weddings—
and was a good dancer;
who was married to the same
woman for fifty years
and had three children
and five grandchildren,
only two of whom he lived to see;
who died suddenly thirty
years ago after consulting
his gold pocketwatch
engraved with celestial bodies;
the watch his father
sent him from Europe
when he arrived in America
at age thirteen
on an Egyptian freighter
with forty dollars
and a cardboard suitcase;
the watch he was buried with,
which even now, my heels
planted in the stubborn grass
on this windswept hillside,
I can hear ticking
down among his bones.

Nicholas Christopher

had lasted more than a season at around 3,000. But that shakedown was obviously inevitable, given the unrealistic foundations and undigested philosophies so many of them started with, and by the end of that decade it is thought that there were probably no more than 500 to 1,000 ongoing groups. Today, thanks to the careful work of this *Directory of Intentional Communities* (c/o Sandhill Farm, Route 1 Box 155, Rutledge, MO 63563), we know that there are some 375 alternative communities in existence in North America—counting, of course, only those that wish to be counted.

Also, thanks to the work done by the *Communities* magazine people who have compiled this extraordinary book, we know quite a bit about those communities. A six-page map shows which ones are located where—none in Idaho or Utah or Nebraska or Alabama, in case you were wondering, but eighteen in Oregon, fifteen in New York, ten in Arizona, fifty-nine in California, three in Hawaii and one in Quebec—and an accompanying chart lists fourteen descriptive elements for each group, including size and diet and economic system and "sexual restrictions." These are followed by sixty-five pages of expanded descriptions of and by each group, checked and reconfirmed before publication.

But that's not all. There is also a section of three dozen articles on all aspects of community life ("Why Live Communally?"; "Women in Community"; "Consensus Ingredients"; "The Wonders of Communal Economics"; etc.) and, especially important, on how to go about finding a place to join ("How to Visit a Community"; "A Word About Cults"; etc.), all in the most comprehensive treatment I have ever seen of the practicalities, not overlooking the difficulties, of communal living. And it is followed by a long list of resources (technical assistance, magazines, businesses) useful to those involved in cooperative alternatives—and others.

There have been other attempts to catalogue and survey the community world—including *Communities*' own previous directories—but there has never been anything as thorough, as wide-ranging and as just plain fascinating as this. □

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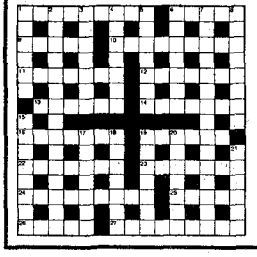

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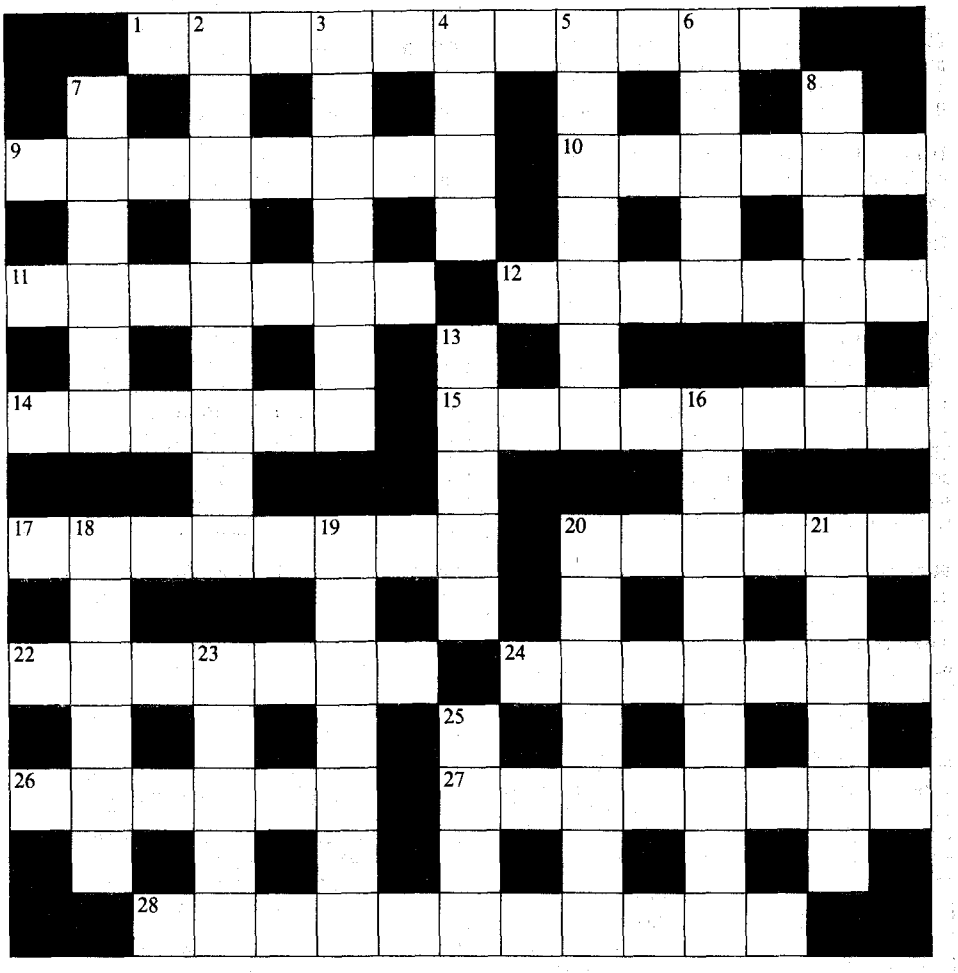
R	■	N	■	E	■	W	■	T	■	O	■	M	■	A
D	A	T	E	D	N	E	S	S	■	S	E	A	M	Y
■	■	I	■	■	■	R	■	■	■	T	■	■	■	E
T	A	L	E	S	■	S	O	B	R	I	Q	U	E	T
O	■	L	■	T	■	O	■	A	■	C	■	K	■	T
T	R	A	D	E	O	F	F	S	■	S	E	R	G	E
H	■	■	■	E	■	■	■	I	■	■	■	A	■	■
E	L	G	A	R	■	W	A	L	L	O	W	I	N	G
W	■	R	■	S	■	A	■	I	■	P	■	N	■	U
I	D	I	O	M	A	T	I	C	■	T	H	I	N	E
S	■	E	■	A	■	E	■	A	■	E	■	A	■	S
E	L	F	I	N	■	R	E	S	I	D	E	N	T	S

Crossword Puzzle No. 2329

FRANK W. LEWIS



ACROSS

1 Evidently such as the Stone was ready for picking, which some hope to reach. (1,4,3,3)
9 Prison poetry? Quite the opposite. Is that any way to talk? (7)
10 and 19 down Does one tally the ideas of where one might look for thread? (6,7)
11 Certainly not a well-fleshed-out tune, but some say dreams are made of it. (4,3)
12 Some spot in the gulf area where you'll find me returning rather mad? (7)
14 Equivalent to a wrong 'un addled, as they properly say. (3,3)
15 Ten clues might have to be solved, but it's good enough to eat! (8)
17 See 8 down
20 The government seems to have a number of troops for which some Books are missing. (6)
22 Like fog, it should be 15. (3,4)
24 They are probably hooked, and did badly in parts of the play. (7)
26 Notice an opening coming? (6)
27 Unlike 24, these got away with a curve around the criminal plan, as they say. (8)
28 Is one's lie small and colorless though one's account might have a lot in it? (5-6)

DOWN

2 and 23 Is what you are supposedly even after British dessert? (7,2,5)
3 and 21 If they signal "too much time" you might be penalized. (7,6)
4, 13 and 25 If conscientious, one might strive to do it, but evidently not by going up and down. (4,5,4)
5 With candy, I'm supplying a lot of energy! (7)
6 Smaller form of a large Florida specimen, possibly associated with football. (5)
7 Is what he reputedly did "fit?" (6)
8 and 17 across City, state and land parcel that might have led to a revolution. (6,8)
13 See 4
16 An appealing sort, but "extra giving." (9)
18 What was ready for picking in 1 across, and wrongly followed in the meeting. (6)
19 See 10 across
20 Supposedly rather red root? (7)
21 See 3
23 See 2
25 See 4

SEE LAST WEEK'S SOLUTION AT LEFT

PUZZLED?

No more cross words. If you don't see why "Lures" are "Ground Rules," send for those of Mr. Lewis to *The Nation*, 72 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10011.

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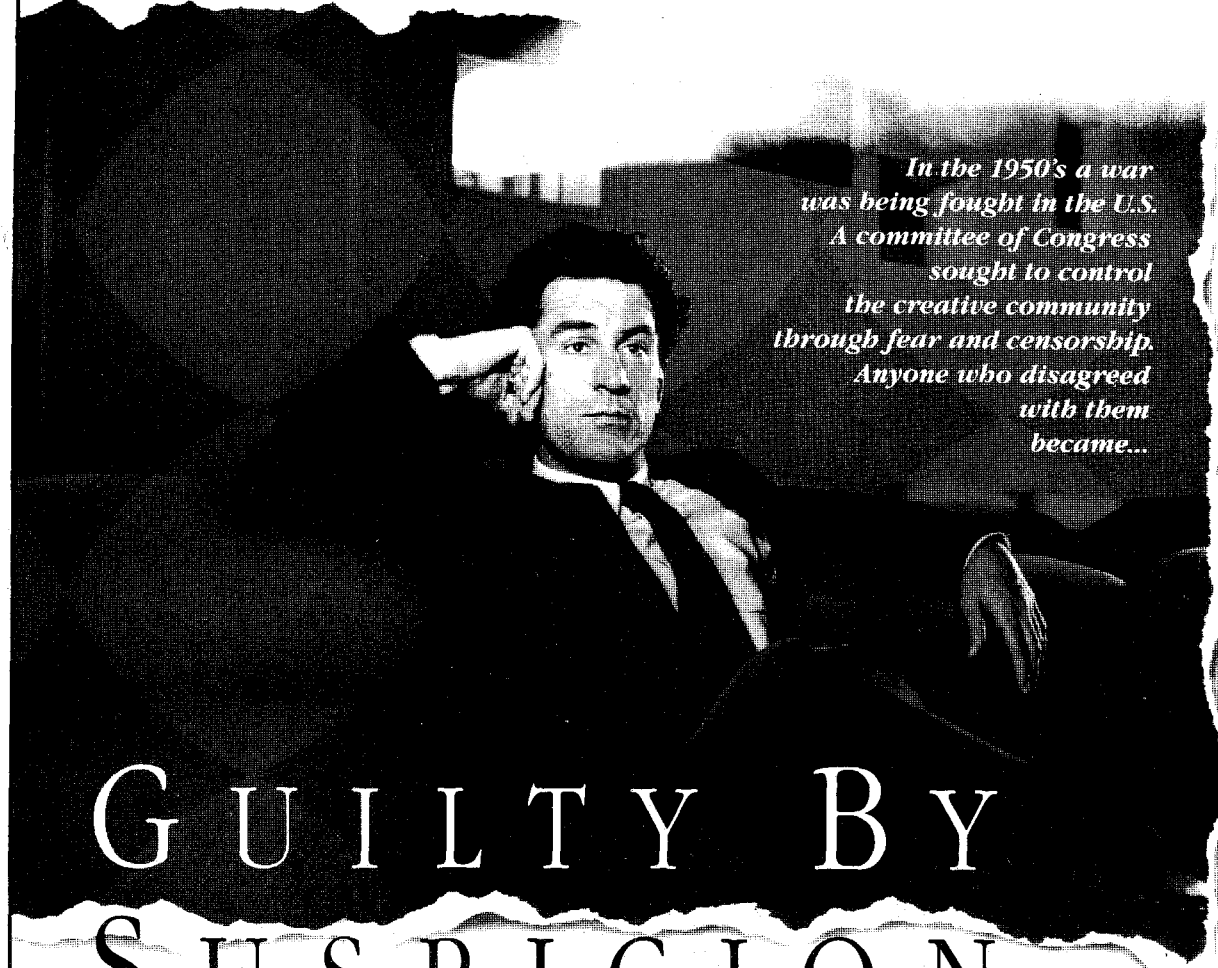
ROBERT DE NIRO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